GOOD FRIDAY TO EASTER SUNDAY

ROBERT KANE, S.J.

GOOD FRIDAY TO EASTER SUNDAY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE SERMON OF THE SEA,
AND OTHER STUDIES.

THE PLAIN GOLD RING.

FROM FETTERS TO FREEDOM:
TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS OF
IRISH FAITH.

WORTH.

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TO THOSE
WHO SUFFER OR WHO MOURN
WITHOUT SYMPATHY AND WITHOUT HOPE
THIS BOOK
IS
REVERENTLY AND AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED
BY THE AUTHOR

Christmas 1912

PREFACE

THESE Sermons were written and preached just a quarter of a century ago. They were written to be spoken: to be spoken not carelessly nor coldly, but with the intense earnestness of absolute conviction, fanned to burning by the breathing of a divine message.

To me, they seemed too intimate and too sacred to be cast into the rigid clasp of dull, dumb type to lie cold, motionless, lifeless, awaiting their literary doom from the sentence passed upon them by the curious or contemptuous eye of critic or of scoffer. Nevertheless, many of my friends urged me persistently to publish them, insisting that thus my work would bear far wider and more abundant fruit of help to others. As at last I yield to this advice, I recognise that if it is to be done at all, it were better that it were done at once. The poet's song is echoing in my ear in gentle, yet near, tone of warning: 'Sunset and evening star, and one clear call for me.' I must not leave my work

undone. I may not tarry, lest too soon I meet 'Twilight and evening bell, and after that the dark.'

Should my style prove unpalatable to the taste of some, I can only plead for my excuse that it is my own, that is to say, myself. But as these thoughts were born within my heart in humble prayer to God and close communing with Nature, and as they have been clothed in outward expression with all the worshipful care and reverent affection which I can command, so do I now offer them, such as they are, to Christ, trusting that they may be vivified, by His most gentle grace, unto supernatural power to bear to other hearts that suffer, or that mourn, balm and healing.

ROBERT KANE, S.J.

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GOOD FRIDAY
TO
EASTER SUNDAY

THE FIVE WOUNDS

'*He was wounded for our iniquities.*'—ISAIAH liii. 5.

WERE you to look upon one wounded so that from out deep gashes the dark life-blood flowed; were yours the hand which, with cruel stab or brutal blow, had changed the God-like majesty of that human form into a helpless mangled mass of pallid clay and red-stained ashes, of quivering pain and crumbling dust; were the life thus ending one that had been devoted to your welfare and sacrificed for your love, would not your very soul recoil in horror and in shame from the sight of what your crime had done? But if, through some strange chance, the very wounds you gave had been the means of binding your victim and yourself in one love, strong as death and warm as blood, would

not the memory of those wounds have ever after for your eyes and heart a mystery and a message of tender sympathy as well as of pathetic sorrow?

Those who have led the purest and the noblest lives have most of all been wont to dwell in constant contemplation upon the sacred Passion of Our Lord. The physical pain which He endured might, indeed, of itself only fill the mind with bitterness or with terror, and make us shrink from the recollection of such appalling woe; but those sufferings are bound up with the tenderest proofs of God's great pity for the sinner, and they teach us, as nothing else could, what deep human sympathy we may find, when we least merit it but need it most, in the great Heart of Jesus Christ. Thus the thought of Our Redeemer's wounds not only does not repel us in horror but gently draws us towards Him; for we cannot forget that they were borne patiently and lovingly for our sake, and we know that it is not yet too late to change those bleeding marks of pain into traces of a loving compact sealed in blood and fruitful in heroic tenderness.

Now, of all Christ's sacred wounds there are five that were deepest and deadliest: those which dug His hands and feet, and that which pierced His side. The tearing of flesh, the crushing of nerves, the straining of sinews made them throb-

bing realities of pain and agony; while they were also the quivering and burning rents through which the nails held Him on the Cross, or through which His Heart was opened wide out to the world.

Therefore, with all the sacredness of His great sorrow that came upon Him for our love, with all the sorrow of our great sin which His forgiveness has changed to greater love, we venerate the Five Wounds of Our Saviour. They are marks of His great pain. They are scars of our great sin. Thus they are the seal of His sympathy and of our sorrow; and thus they are memories and motives of tender sadness.

Again, the Five Wounds of Our Saviour are tokens of His sacrifice and pledges of our salvation. They are taken as types of His holocaust, from the fulness of their mystic meaning; for they signify the completeness of the sacrifice which fastened Him to the Cross.

The hand is the emblem of work and power. It is the means of practical use of strength. Not only is the physical force of man exerted naturally by the hand, but all the subtlety of invention and fertility of thought, by which man has made the elements his ministers and the brutes his slaves, have only changed from abstract theory to practical effect through the dexterous use of fingers fitted to grasp, to guide, to direct, to mould. The hand,

in the word of the old philosophers, is 'the instrument of instruments.' It is the key to use; the link between ideal energy and its material result. The hand is, therefore, the emblem of the power of man.

The foot is the means of movement. It is, then, the type of freedom to pass from place to place, of liberty to reach the point where will may wish to go, and where the hand may be able to act. Talent and toil have given us artificial means of journeying with the speed of living creatures, and of flying with the force of steam. But the foot is the first means of natural movement, and is, therefore, the sign and the symbol of freedom from fetter, and of liberty to walk where want or wish may prompt.

Now, when the hands and feet are tightly pinioned, we have a picture of helplessness; and when they are riveted with iron bolts, we have an image of hopeless loss of power and freedom; and when relentless nails of iron have dug their way through hands and feet into outstretched beams of wood, clasping living flesh and blood-stained timber in one quivering cross of death, then we have a Crucifix, a figure of Our Saviour's sacrifice.

Out wide were stretched His arms, nailed to the Cross, that never more in life they should move with human power, that never more in death they

should close their wide embrace. Down deep through His feet the heavy hammer forced the cold cruel nail, that never more in life His feet should move in human freedom, that never more in death His feet should stray away from the touch or tear of the sinner.

Nailed hand and foot to a cross, what was wanting to make full this human heroism of offering for sin's Atonement? One thing yet: His Heart. The heart is more than a muscle which forces forth the life-giving currents of blood. The heart has a meaning so tender that when its truth is ignored a chill pallor will whiten the cheek, and loosen the grasp, and stifle the breathing, and leave one as lifeless. The heart has a meaning so strong that, if understood, a look may send the warm waves of its blood in rapturous tide to the face, and beat resounding echoes of happy life to thoughts which no words could utter. The heart means the fulness of human feeling; and human feeling means all that is more than brute and less than angel in human life. The heart means human love.

A wide wound opened out Our Saviour's side, and from it flowed forth mingled blood and water, signs of a heart that is broken. This wound made a way for the last and tenderest message of Christ, the message of His Heart, broken with sorrow, yet open to our love.

Our Saviour still wears the stigmata of His Five Wounds. They are the seals upon His sacred flesh of our salvation. He cannot change in love. He holds these pledges of His troth to us. Our soul is saved; our soul is His, unless we rob Him of the fruit of His Five precious Wounds.

Lastly, and this is the first truth and final fact of all Our Saviour's Passion: these wounds are lessons of His love. His love is not in empty words, but in His work; and so His love is written on His hands and feet with iron naïls, and with a spear of steel His love is written on His Heart. It is a lesson of what love really means; a lesson of what our love should be; a lesson of true hands that strongly work for Him; a lesson of true feet that faithfully follow Him; a lesson of true heart that, in unselfishness and sacrifice, deeply and tenderly loves Him. Learn from His Wounds the lesson of His love. When you have learned something of it, you will find that you are beginning to realise that God is love, and that all true Christian life consists, indeed, in being pure, and also in being kind.

FIRST WORD

'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'
ST. LUKE xxiii. 34.

GREAT truths are easily told, but language can never render the whole of the sense which they bear. The most sublime mysteries speak in simple words, yet neither tongue of man nor thought of angel could unfold or fathom the fulness of their meaning. Of things that are trivial we can readily talk. Of things that touch our heart with love, or still our soul in awe, we can find in speech only faint and feeble echoes. Like the sound of the sea that tells and retells in its ebb and flow the lesson of fleeting time; like the ocean that thunders forth from its throbbing breast the message of all-enfolding eternity, so the resounding thoughts that thrill our life and palpitate within our blood are too great to be painted in pictures or to be measured with words. Who shall tell what the wild waves are saying? Who shall render in human phrase the truths that bear men's hopes on their bosom up towards the opening skies, or that whirl men's

fears in confusion and gloom down to depths that have no ending? Who shall set in speech the secrets of the eternal Word?

'And I said: Ah, ah, ah, Lord God! I cannot speak, for I am a child. And the Lord said: Do not say I cannot speak. Behold! I have given my words in thy mouth.'

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God.' With one passing breath, the truth of Christ's Godhead is uttered; yet what it fully means, even the eternal contemplation of an angel cannot comprehend. 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us.' How familiar the lesson sounds! Yet never could creature's heart contain gratitude able worthily to answer the tenderness revealed in the true manhood of the Christ. 'He loved me, and delivered Himself for me.' It is the human echo of God's love, set in one short sentence. What this really means we cannot say, we cannot think. We can only bow down in silent adoration before the mystery of the Cross.

Ever and always, as Good Friday comes, the simple tidings of Our Saviour's Death renews the memory of that love which loved us first, and which loves us most; for, 'being God, He did empty Himself, taking upon Him the form of a slave,' that for our sake and in our stead He might die, and we might live.

This mystery of our Redemption by the blood and love of God-made-Man is best told as it has been revealed, with the solemnity of strong devotedness such as nerved the Mother to stand beneath the Cross, and with the simplicity of heart-felt feeling such as made the Magdalen crouch, weeping, at its foot. On this day, sacred to a love divine as God, tender as a tear, we understand the words of St. Chrysostom: 'Not with eloquence, but with tears, shall we again, in humble sorrow, tell the story of Our Saviour's Death.'

When Jesus came to Gethsemane, He said: 'My soul is sorrowful even unto death!' Then He went apart alone to pray. He prayed: for the hour of His Passion had come. He prayed: for 'the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' He prayed: for at that moment there was lifted to His lips the chalice of His bitterness. That chalice held a foretaste of the sufferings which should shatter and destroy the fair fabric of His human nature, the hallowed temple of the Eternal Word; that chalice held the pains, the pangs, the wounds, the woes, the torments, and the tortures, which the reprobate hate of demons could invent, or heartless cruelty of man inflict; that chalice held the gall and wormwood of insult and of outrage which should embitter every human feeling, and fester within His human heart. It held the humilia-

tion, the scorn, the contempt, the dishonour, the disgrace, which should make Him a stumbling-block to the Jew, a scandal to the Gentile, the victim of coarse jest and cruel gibe from Roman soldiers, the hated culprit spurned by priest and people, the mocked fool of courts, the laughing-stock of the rabble, the most abject of creatures, an outcast of the earth; that chalice held the weariness and woe of distraught human feelings which should exhaust and daze with agony the human heart and brain of Christ. It held the sadness, the prostration, the dread, the awe, the fainting apprehensions, the impetuous yearnings, the horrified disappointments, the indignant uprisings, the despairing recoilings, the swaying doubts, the appalling terrors, the shocked bewilderment, the crushing shame, the wild appealings, the forlorn loneliness, the paralysing numbness, the desolate murmurs, the repinings, the sighs, the sobs, the moans, the convulsive throes, the racking and rending paroxysms that burst with fitful whirling ebb and flow from within that poor human heart, left to sink and cower in its human feebleness and fright.

Within that chalice, too, were all the sins of all the sinful world. The vision of all the length of evil time, and of all the width of the wicked world, was before Him. Sin arose before Him. Sin was thrust upon Him. All the sins of all the world—

each sin one after the other, each sin with its own weight and filth and corruption, each sin with all its own abominable circumstance clearly shown, with all its own degrading wallowings vividly lit up—all sins with all their madness, their frenzy, their malice, their guilt, their horror, their hell, were thrust upon Him, laid at His door, charged to His ownership, given to His carrying, piled upon Him as His very own, that He might answer for them in the sight of God, that He might pay their penalty, bear their pain, and, as the culprit, expiate their crime.

Oh, God, what wonder that His whole body should weep tears of blood! What wonder that His whole soul should recoil in terrified anguish, refusing with piteous supplication, with writhing desperation, in an agony of shame, to touch the chalice filled by sinful man with such infinite bitterness that God-made-Man might drink it!

Thrice did He pray, with the earnestness of a death-struggle, with the entreaty of a soul that shrinks back from the mouth of hell: 'O My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away from Me!' Thrice did He think of us, of me, of thee, and bow His Head to the dust, and pray: 'Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt!'

When the traitor came, Jesus arose. The pale

splendours of the paschal moon deepened the dark shadows of the olives, and crowned with clearer radiance the majestic figure of the Christ. The pain and pallor of death were in His face; but they were strangely veiled by large-beaded drops of crimson agony, red tears of blood that had been driven, by out-welling terror, out from the depths of His Heart. As Judas changed the fondest sign of friendship into treachery's mark of doom, 'betraying the Son of man with a kiss,' his lips were moistened with the heart-blood of the Lamb.

What passed during the night of Our Saviour's Passion, we shall never know on earth! We can only meditate, in vague wonder, in silent horror, on what this means: that the Incarnate Word was given up to the cruel and foul whims of infamous men, and delivered over to the suggestions of the powers of darkness.

On the morrow, wearied and unnerved, He was yet hurried from court to court, dragged from the tribunal of the hypocrite High Priest to the judgment-seat of the scandalous King, from the cowardly representative of Roman rule to the blasphemous profaner of Jewish law. Everywhere was He brutally jostled, struck, spat upon! Oh, surely, surely, only God's own Omnipotence could have held back the avenging anger, the fire of destroying

swords that flashed and flamed with the indignant wrath of the angels, when, from the foul mouths of animal men, the defiling outrage of spittle was cast in the face of Christ!

Then the scourging! The shame of the Virgin Christ, stripped of the garments which His Mother wove, in the open gaze of a brutal crowd! The writhing whirl of the lash, the venomous hiss, the piercing sting, the biting cut, the searching smart, the tremulous quivering, the purpling bruise, the red bleeding, the open-mouthed wound, the racking fierceness, the furious panting, the scorching fire, the bitter, bitter anguish of that torture! Oh, the degradation of that punishment, that ignoble chastisement, reserved for brutes and slaves!

Then the reeling, sickening, maddening agony of the crown of thorns! The excruciating dart, and the heavy, dull pain! The rending pang, and the distraught frenzy of fiery points that pierced His brow like nails of flame, shrivelling His nerves with probing heat, rocking His brain to and fro in paroxysms of torment! The mockery of such a crowning: the derisive rag of imperial purple; the reed for sceptre; the homage done Him, with taunt and gibe and wanton insult! 'Behold the Man!' O Jesus! Jesus! Have I done this to Thee?

Then came the struggle against sinking strength

and prostrate powers as Christ, condemned to be crucified, staggered forward under the bruising jolt or fell beneath the crushing load of His own Cross, on the march up the hill of Golgotha. At last, the procession halted on the hill-top. The soldiers formed round the Christ; and, for some moments, nothing more was seen. But, while sudden shadows of the night spread across the noon-day's brightness, covering the earth with mysterious gloom, through the death-like stillness that hushed the very breathing of the multitude a light sound thrilled through the air, shaking men's hearts with strange dread, smiting upon men's souls with blows of supernatural horror—the sound of a hammer driving a nail through some tender substance which the listeners felt to be human flesh. Again a pause! Then slowly, slowly, the head of the Cross was lifted up, while its foot was brought to the brink of the place prepared. Roughly and recklessly it was made ready, until one strong shove flung the huge weight over, and the Cross, with a dislocating shock, fell into its earthen socket. Quickly and coarsely, clay and stones were trampled round. Then, with folded arms, the executioners rested, and turned to look up at their work.

Upon the hill of Golgotha, high above men's heads, against the sky, there stood a dark cross of wood, and on it hung, from nails, something from

which blood poured; something which all there present knew to have once been the beautiful and majestic form of One always tender towards the weak and poor, always mighty in merciful work; something which the trembling earth, the saddened sky, the dim sun, the rent rocks, the opening graves, the torn veil of the Temple, the spirits of the dead startled from their death-sleep, the adoring legions of angels, proclaimed to be the human body of God.

All the world before had looked forward, through types and figures, towards that Crucifixion; for the hope of that mysterious moment had upheld the souls of men, since Paradise was lost. All the world since looks back upon the reality of that Crucifixion, for it was the sin-offering of the world's Redeemer. What do they all behold? One wounded so, that 'from the top of His head to the sole of His foot there is no soundness in Him'; one torn and tortured so, that 'they have numbered all His bones'; one so afflicted and so crushed; one fallen so low, that by His Prophet He made this feeble moan: 'I am a worm, and no man!'

The executioners looked up at their work, as it is written: 'They shall look on Him Whom they pierced.'

Draw near! Draw near! all ye whose sins

have slain the Christ! Draw near! and now, in spirit, stand beneath the Cross. Hear the Prophet cry unto you: 'Behold, there is blood on thy hands!' Stand beneath the Cross. Look up! That is your work!

Have you ever knelt by the death-bed of one whom you should have loved? The solemnity of a life that is ending for ever, the awe of eternal doom that draws near, silence all superficial thought, and abash you before the unveiled presence of the truth. As you look upon the face of the dying, there stands in judgment against you the vision of the past. Like threatening spectres of injured souls, like haunting phantoms of unforgiven sin, there arise before you all the deep motives for faithful affection, all the strong reasons for gentle forbearance which, in your selfish thoughtlessness, you neglected, or which, in your hard pride, you disdained. Now you are overwhelmed by the consciousness of your cruelty that was ignobly hidden under mean pretence of right, or openly exercised under the safeguard of petty but incessant trifles. Now you are crushed beneath the self-condemnation of bitter unkindness or withering contempt which was all you gave when love was sorely needed, and when pity was humbly asked for by a soul in pain. As you watched with harrowing fixedness the pale face, so drawn, so still, as in the hushed quiet of low voices and subdued

sound the efforts of breathing in agony smote upon your soul, as you wistfully sought in those fading eyes for one look of recognition, one message of farewell, one gleam of forgiving love, surely, surely, you recognised then that when we have blighted the breathing spirit there is little use in doing reverence to the dust; that when we have ruthlessly quenched the light and fire of a soul, we need not offer our gratitude to the ashes; that when we have broken the throbbing heart, it is too late to weep over the cold clay; that when we have wronged the living, it is too late to love the dead. Oh, what would you not have given then to have been able, with the warmest blood-drops of your heart, to soothe the suffering you inflicted, and to redeem again for ever all the pain you gave! Did you not wish as you stood by the corpse—did you not wish, with the keen grief of remorse that is unavailing—did you not wish that it were yet possible to lay your soul's best love, in humble sorrow, at the feet of the dead, if it could only win back one word of tender forgiveness before it was too late? Love is bitter, bitter, bitter, that comes too late!

Look upon the face of the dying Christ! Once He was beautiful. Once the tender grace of His Maiden-Mother was reflected, with human loveliness and divine majesty, in every feature of the Incarnate Word. Once, in that once which is

eternal, He, God the Beautiful, loved you. Once, in that moment when he first took a human heart, He loved you. Ever and always He has loved you since. Yet, you by sin have smitten Him in the face; and you by sin have torn and mangled all His most innocent limbs with scourges; and you by sin have plaited that cruel crown which racks His gentle brows; and you by sin have nailed Him to the Cross; and you by sin have broken His poor Heart. Oh, look upon Him whom you have pierced! See the sore agony of pain wherewith your sin has laid Him low that loved you first and loves you most! Then, as you kneel beneath the death-bed of His Cross, hear the first prayer of His love: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what what they do!'

O great Heart of love! Dost Thou not know how we have wronged Thee? O God! Who dost search the souls of men, seest Thou not our sin? Dost Thou not know our wretchedness, our worthlessness, our guilt, our shame? Did the world but know us as Thou, we should indeed cower beneath its contempt and hide our burning face from its just scorn. But none can know the depth of our iniquity as Thou, O God of truth! 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before Thee! I am not worthy to be called Thy son!' O great Heart of love! Didst Thou not feel the cruel stab

of our ingratitude? Did not the baseness of our treachery embitter Thy soul with life-long anguish? Did not our crimes trample, oh, horror! upon the outbursting warmth of Thy beating blood? O Beauty ever ancient and ever new, too late have we known Thee, too late have we loved Thee!

Not yet, not yet! O great Heart of love! It is not yet too late! When all others would spurn us, Thou dost pity. When all others would condemn, Thou dost forgive. Pray, pray, O great Heart! pray unto Thy Father! 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!' Nay, we knew not! 'Like the blind, we have groped as if we had no eyes! We have stumbled at noon-day as in darkness.'

O great Heart of love! O Man, Who yet art God, Thou Who didst love us first! O God, Who yet art Man, Thou Who dost love us most! Forgive! Forgive! Tell us still we are forgiven, that we do not love too late! Teach us to know Thee now at last! Teach us to love Thee now, at last. O kind Heart! O dearest Friend! O gentlest Brother! O most loving Christ! Make our hearts like Thine, great with a strength that is never cruel, soft with a sympathy that is never weak! Strengthen and soften our hearts that we may not love too late! Teach us, too, O great Heart of love, teach

us to pray with Thee, like Thee, for all those whom Thou dost love, our brothers and our sisters in Thy love, teach us to pray with Thee, like Thee: 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!'

SECOND WORD

'Amen, I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise!'—LUKE xxiii. 43.

FROM His Cross, Christ looked out over Golgotha. Before Him lay Jerusalem, the city of His choice, and on its sacred hill stood the Temple of His Testament with Israel. Through tears and blood, His eyes looked forth over a tumultuous sea of faces, uplifted in savage storm of passion, white as foam with hate, bitter as salt-spray with unrelenting cruelty. Through tears and blood, His eyes looked forth upon this people that He had so loved. But a far sadder sight smote upon His soul; for, through the pain of a crushed spirit, through the anguish of a breaking heart, His mind beheld the vision of the souls of men.

From His Cross, Christ looked forth upon the world which He had come to save. It was the supreme moment of all time, the moment when all the evil of all the ages of the earth was gathered in concentrated storm of onset against Heaven. It was the moment when the eternal Word-made-

Flesh hung upon a Cross in sacrifice, dying. It was the moment when there met, face to face, the sins of the world and the world's Redeemer. It was the moment when each single separate soul of all that were children of Adam came to Christ upon His Cross, that He might buy it back to life by His own death. It was the moment when each single sin came to Christ upon His Cross, that He might atone for it by His agony, and win pardon for it by His love.

It was the supreme moment of all time. It was the darkest moment between the first gloom cast athwart creation's light and the final gloom that will shroud the last day of the earth; for then was thickening there all the gloom of all the ages, darkened with the folly, blackened with the crime of centuries widened into evil years, lengthened into evil days, broadened into evil hours, deepened into instants full of endless evil. It was the most terrible moment of all time; for the human body of God was nailed upon a Cross, and over His human soul burst the tempest of human sin. From His Cross, Christ looked forth upon the world and beheld the world's sin.

The world of the past was present there, the world of Paradise lost. Adam, the first father of men and first father of sin; Eve, called the mother of the living, become the mother of death, of sorrow,

and of shame; their first child, the first murderer; sons and daughters that peopled the land with wretchedness and crime, until over the rotting earth there crept the leprosy of the human race; the multitudes that swarmed in pagan hordes around the altars of false gods; the multitudes that knew no god but pride or passion; the multitudes from amongst the chosen people, gathered under the protecting arms of Jehovah, who yet broke away to wander more blindly and to blaspheme more openly; the multitudes that lived always in sin, that lived only for sin, sinning in ever-abounding misery, miserable in all-enfolding sin—these were all there with their sins.

The world of the future, too, was there: the world of the Testament of God's love. It was there with its sin; sins that rent Christ's mystic body; sins that defiled Christ's Spouse; sins of diabolical heresy; sins of brutish vice; sins of scandal that revealed beneath the virginal garb of apostolic innocence ravening wolves of Satan; sins of Christian peoples whose crimes taught deeper darkness to the heathen, lower coarseness to the pagan, and added the malignity of open-eyed denial of the light, and the appalling insolence of reprobate contempt for good; sins of sacrilege, so that lips moistened and sweetened by the blood and love of the Lamb, bodies purified and conse-

crated by the Eucharistic Incarnation of the Son of God, were abandoned to wantonness, foulness, infamy, degradation, and shame.

From His Cross, Christ looked forth upon the sinful world. Every sin that ever stained a soul was then present in His mind. In multitudes countless as the waves of the ocean, in fathomless depths of iniquity, in black violence of guilt, the storm of sin burst on His soul.

Around Him, then, all the sounds of sin thundered in rage, or hissed in vengeance, or lulled in treachery, or shrieked in bitterness, or spoke in shame, or howled in blasphemy, or muttered in despair. The sounds of sin shook the soul of the Christ until every fibre of His body vibrated with the torture of noise, until every feeling throbbed with a tumult of horror, until every thought thrilled with excruciating echoes to the intense agony of resounding sin.

Then, again, were let loose against Him the hideous forms and frightful shapes of sin: ghastly spectres of cruelty, of brutality; weird figures full of sickening wantonness, of harrowing disgust, of foulness, of loathsome ignominy. The deeds, the actions, nay, even the very thoughts that ever were or will be sinful came to Christ upon His Cross. Not pictured, not imaged, not shadowed, but in their own actual nature, in their own true reality, they

arose like the tide of a desolate sea, and rushed, torrent-like, over His soul. Each sin in its own naked horror, all sins in a tempestuous deluge of guilt, broke over Him, filling and flooding His whole soul with overwhelming confusion. As waters that coil and recoil in seething whiteness of broken fury, now hurling forward the terrific shock of their mass, now rushing back in frenzy of panic, smiting everything with the hissing hate and savage stroke of their spray, so did the sins of the world, with the bewildering paroxysm of their wrath, whirl Christ's soul into an abyss where He was blinded by the sights, stunned by the sounds, numbed by the grasp of sin.

Oh, 'boundless as the sea was Thy broken-heartedness,' for Thou, O dear Redeemer, didst know what sin really is! All-holy God, Christ comprehended the madness and the baseness, the degradation and the insult, the defilement and the outrage, of a creature's contempt for its Maker. Man, purest and noblest, joined in One true Person with the eternal Word; He realised the callousness and the ingratitude, the wantonness and the abomination, the turpitude and the frenzy, of a human heart's rejection of God's love. Thus He understood with the serene wisdom of God, and He felt with the sad shuddering experience of man, the real nature of sin.

Yet, all the waters of iniquity were poured upon His soul. 'Surely, He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows; and we have thought Him, as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities. He was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.'

Never was curse or imprecation uttered, never was word impure or venomous spoken, never was blasphemous oath hurled against Heaven, that did not seem to stain His lips; for the sins of the world were laid upon Him. Never was open act of evil, or secret deed of shame, done that was not thrust into His hands, that He, as guilty, might bear its load of corruption; for the sins of the world were laid upon Him. Never was inmost thought of evil, or foul desire, cherished that did not creep into His mind and heart, as though its sin and its corruption, too, were His. The pangs that rent His sacred body, the quivering wounds, the racked nerves, the burning nails, the maddening thorns—these were only pains that reached the body. But sin tortured His soul; for the sins of the world were laid upon Him.

All His feelings bared and broken; all His sympathies hurt and harrowed; all His shrinking shame, and writhing anguish, dragged through the open and endless catalogue of sin, while He hung upon His Cross as the culprit on whom should fall the vengeance of His Father's just judgment; all His entreaties slighted, His generosity spurned, His love thwarted, His tenderness mocked at, His very Redemption for so many multitudes of no avail—these were the sorrows of His soul. Oh, woe, woe, woe that was wide and bitter as the ocean, deep as eternal remorse, and dark, black, hopeless, as despair!

It was the triumph of sin. For sin had destroyed Paradise; sin had ruined the earth; sin had shut Heaven; sin had broken down the Law; sin had trampled upon love; sin had brought man to hell; now sin is bringing God to death. It is the supreme moment of all time; it is the triumph of sin over God.

But shall sin triumph? Listen! Through the hoarse roar of that human sea, there comes an echo of grace. Through the storm and gloom of that human chaos, there comes a gleam of love. On a cross, beside the Christ, there hangs a man of sin. From his cross he, too, looks out over Golgotha, and sees the world's sin. He sees it; but as a sinner, answering curse for curse, giving hate for

hate. He sees it, and shares in it, flinging his imprecations out over the crowd, shouting his blasphemies into the ear of Christ. From his cross, the sinner blasphemes the Christ! But from His Cross, Christ looks upon the sinner. When again the crucified sinner looks upon the Crucified Christ, the eyes of Jesus meet his own. Then from their mysterious depths a strange light dawns within his soul. He had seen that look before! Was it in the desert once, in the arms of a maiden that fled from wrong? Was it in his dreams, when his life had been gentle and good? He had seen that look before! Never could other eyes reveal such infinite depths of pity; never could other eyes express such sacred majesty of purity; never could other eyes speak such desolate story of sorrow; never could other eyes plead with such intensity of tenderness; never could other eyes beseech with such broken-hearted yearning; never could other eyes utter such divine messages of love; never could other eyes tell such sweet sympathy of mercy! Oh, he had seen that look before, but never as now! In the desert, and in his dreams, it had spoken to him; but he had broken away from it, hardening his heart against its sad sweet story of love. Now, it holds him, holds him with the gentleness of Omnipotence, holds him with the omnipotence of

mercy. Those eyes of his Redeemer hold him now. Through blood and tears, with unutterable yearning, with reproachful tenderness, with piteous pleading, with sorrowful sympathy, love looks forth from the Heart of Jesus. Love looks forth into the eyes of the sinner, deep, deep down into the sinner's heart, touching it gently, softening it sweetly, healing it mildly, uplifting it strongly, with the balm and blessing of grace. Then, beneath all the encrusted weight and adamantine ice of sin, a fresh warm tear, pure as an angel's prayer, soft as the slumber of a child, is born, and, silently upwelling, melts from within the cold rugged mass of misery gathered upon that heart by darkened years of weeping summers, hardened upon that heart by winter years of unremitting guilt, until, with a sudden breath of hope, with a sudden heaving of grief, with a sudden out-sobbing of sorrow, like the rending outpouring of waters that break from a frost-bound river, the whole soul of the sinner bursts, in a torrent of tenderness, away towards the unimprisoned, boundless, fathomless, ever-freshening, ever-rejoicing, ever-rapturous ocean of the God of its love. Then, from his heart to his lips, a sublime act of faith and trust echoes in the prayer of the poor crucified robber: 'Lord, remember me when Thou dost come into Thy kingdom.'

From His Cross, Christ looks upon the penitent thief. Sin had triumphed in that heart, as it had triumphed in the world. But the triumph of sin was not yet secure. God had not yet given His answer to the triumph of sin. Hear God's answer: 'Amen, Amen, I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise!' Christ looks again upon him that had been a sinner. Never before had the penitent seen such a look as this. It is God's human Heart that looks forth in loving pardon. Now, the penitent may die in peace. His eyes have beheld his salvation.

From His Cross, Christ looks out over Golgotha. He sees the world's sin. He bides sin's triumph and then He puts His own power forth, redeeming the world by His suffering, conquering its sin by His sorrow, overwhelming its triumph by His mercy.

As in the beginning the Creator said: 'Let there be light,' and there was light; as He commanded the waters that they should not pass their boundaries, so could He scatter the shadows and darkness that hang over our human life; so could He order the ebb and flow of our human feeling to throb only in harmony with His own will. Or, again, as He once submerged the earth beneath an upheaval of the ocean and a downpour of the sky; as He once destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven; so could He always and ever sweep the

sinful away in the torrent of His indignation, or crush them under the cataclysm of His wrath. But such victory would be only a victory of strength. It would be only a conquest of power; it would be only a triumph of force. But, again, the triumph of force is little, and God is great. God triumphs over sin by mercy.

Realise then, to the full, the gloom and terror and desolation of sin. Realise the magnitude of its empire in the world, and the enormity of its rebellion against God. Realise all this: and then try to realise that, however sinful man can be, yet God's infinite goodness can reach farther and deeper still. At the foot of the Cross, try to realise the mystery of God's mercy. From His Cross, Christ looks forth upon the world, not in anger but in pity, not in vengeance but in pleading, not in condemnation but in tenderness, not in bitterness but in love, not in judgment but in mercy.

Wounded, indeed, He was; bruised and broken with agony; tortured, in truth, He was; and overwhelmed with shame and sorrow, with grief and humiliation, broken-hearted. Yet, from every open wound there came a message of mercy; every blood-drop bore with it warm love and soothing sweetness for the sinner. Yes; sin had conquered Him with woe, but He had triumphed over sin by mercy.

Never can sin triumph in the world. Sin there is, and always, while the earth lasts, there will be sin, but it cannot conquer Christ. His mercy is invincible in life. Even the reprobate can only escape from it by death. After death will come the triumph of justice, the setting of the balance by the hand of Truth. Now, there is never justice for the sinner; always mercy, only mercy; for while the sin of man is in one scale of the balance, in the other Christ has cast His life and blood and tears and Heart and love.

Oh, doubt not the mercy of God! Rebellious, hardened and desperate, the robber had through life resisted the call of grace; but, when he was dying the death of a criminal, abandoned by men as reprobate, hurried by justice out of the world, a love that had loved him before Creation, a love that still loved him when all other love had failed, the love of Him who loved him first and loved him most, drew still closer to his obdurate heart, clinging to it with deathless earnestness, importuning it with pity that would not be denied; and when at last the dying sinner yielded to his Saviour's tenderness, uttering a wailing cry for mere remembrance, the triumphant and impetuous Heart of Jesus burst forth in sublime ecstasy of gratitude, in glorious solemnity, not of mere pardon, but of divine promise: 'Amen, Amen,

I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise!'

Thus is it always and ever. God's mercy triumphs in the world. Do not doubt it! God's mercy waits and watches, ever unwearied. Before your first thought in the dawn, it is eagerly bringing from Heaven inspirations bright as cherubs, and seraph-like throbbings of love, pure sweet graces, to bless your awakening. When your senses are steeped in slumber, God's mercy bends over you, counting your breathing, upholding your heart, lest you should die in your sin. All the day long, God's mercy follows you, guiding and shielding your path, sending His angels to bear you up lest you should dash your foot against a stone, prompting your every word, strengthening your every action, tempering the breeze for your feebleness, mingling the sunshine of happiness and the mists of sorrow, blending the summer breath of joy and the winter chill of trial that so you may grow in good or be warned away from evil. Even when you sin, God's mercy haunts you with tender reproaches, plucking you strongly back, or sadly pursuing you with unrelenting sweetness. Even when you sin, the Good Shepherd, unwearied, is tracking every step of your wandering; even when you sin, the Good Samaritan, with woman-like compassion, is pouring balm into your wounds;

even when you sin, were you a Magdalen or a murderer, the mercy of that great love which loved you first is true and constant still. Even when you sin, were you cast away by all others, condemned for irremediable crime, crucified by irremediable woe, yet the mercy of that great love which loves you most is true and constant still. Even when you sin, ever and always while you live, the deathless mercy of Jesus looks upon your soul. From His Cross, Christ looks upon you. With the unmeasured stooping of His divine pity, with the brotherly sympathy of His deep, great human Heart, Jesus looks upon you from His Cross. Oh, even should you sin, at least do not wrong His mercy! Look at our King upon His throne; the King of love upon the throne of mercy; Jesus Christ upon His Cross. He has given you His life and He has died for you. He has given you His tears, His blood, His Heart, His Mother! Oh, look upon Him! He loved you first. He loves you most. Look upon Him, and in His dying eyes read the message of His mercy. He waits for you. Hear His sad plaint: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock!' Oh! had you stood beneath the Cross, and looked into the dying eyes of Jesus Christ, surely, surely, you would have opened wide your heart soul and to His great mercy! Oh, hear Him knocking at your heart! Open it to His mercy! Open it to

His love! Echo the faith and the trust of the penitent, saying, again and again: 'Lord, remember me when Thou dost come into Thy kingdom!'

All this world shall fail and fade. All this sin shall die for ever. 'Where sin abounded, grace shall still more abound.' We, too, one day shall read in those kind eyes—we, too, one day shall hear from those dear lips—the loving message of His mercy: 'Amen, Amen, I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise!'

THIRD WORD

'Woman, behold thy son! Son, behold thy Mother!'
John xix. 26.

When deep feelings break forth into words, their faltering tones have a pathos that wins pity and their simplest accents have a solemnity that commands respect. We cannot smile, though we might easily weep, at what is ignorant or foolish, when it is spoken with all the strength of a throbbing heart, or murmured with the piteousness of a soul in pain. But when straight out from the warmest depths of blood the tenderest emotions of friendship burst into utterance, or when the sacred sanctuary is unveiled where dwell the inmost thoughts and fondest affections of one we love, then, indeed, as our heart wildly throbs in echo, our spirit bows in reverence that almost reaches awe.

With reverence on Good Friday, and with love, we may dare to meditate upon that hallowed sympathy which bound in one most touching tenderness, in one deep, warm, strong human love,

the hearts of Mary and of Jesus, of the Mother and of the Son.

May we not, first, in spirit contemplate the Maiden-Mother as, in the early days of Nazareth, she bore her Babe upon her arm? As when she might stoop over the quiet mirror of a stream, to draw fresh water for the noon-day meal, her own features, reflected amidst the softened splendours of the sky, would meet her gaze with varying shade of tone yet liquid tenderness of truth, so, when her eyes came back, ever and again, to look upon her Child, she saw the eternal glory of the heavens united to the moving beauty of the earth, in that strangely simple yet sweetly wonderful mirror of her own face. He was hers; her only Child, and only hers. He had no father, no brother, no sister, none; no one on earth, within whose heart flowed His own blood, except His Mother. All that God owned of human blood, of human bone, of human form, of human feature, He had received from the most pure and peerless Virgin within whose arms His infant limbs were folded. Therefore was the calm majesty and serene wisdom of her brow, with its crown of hair goldlike in sheen and rippling in its radiance, reflected from His forehead; therefore were the exquisite innocence and unutterable revelations of light and love which shone through her fair eyes, the perfect line and roseate

bloom of her features, the delicate curve of her lip, with its smile, sad as the shadow of exile, sweet as the dawn of Paradise, the mingled strength and tenderness moulded on her chin, the noble setting of her head, the unconscious grace and music-like modesty of her movements; therefore was all that mystery of beauty, that incarnate loveliness of undimmed creation which made her Queen of earth by nature as she was Mother of fair love by grace; therefore was all this pictured in the blessed fruit of her maidenhood, the adorable Child of her heart. For He was hers, her very own, and only hers.

That likeness was not merely one of form and feature. It reached to the depths of human character. As Mary's soul had never been stained, nor even shadowed by sin, so was she free from every cloud of ignorance, from every breath of passion which has darkened or distressed our nature since Paradise was lost. Nay, the Doctors of the Church teach that, from the very first moment of her existence, with the immaculate robe of grace befitting her Queenship, such clear and comprehensive knowledge was infused into her mind as made her worthy to be called the very 'Seat of Wisdom'; while to her will was given such exquisite strength, such intense energy, such serene loftiness, such heroic devotedness, such true kindliness, such

overflowing, resistless, exhaustless sweetness of sympathy, as brought the brilliant seraphim to learn a brighter innocence and a more burning love in worship at her feet. Of all mere creatures, Mary was God's masterpiece. Thus was she most like in perfection, as she was nearest in kinship and dearest in love, to that human nature which God had received from her, and which He had joined to His own nature in the Person of the Word. Thus both by nature and by grace, by the unity of human bonds, by the unity of intellectual sympathy, by the unity of harmonised character, and by the unity of supernatural gifts, Jesus and Mary were set aside from all others, and joined together in one life, one likeness, one blood, one heart, one thought, one love. He, indeed, was God; she was only a creature. But He was also Man; and Mary was His Mother.

As the child grew 'in age, in wisdom, and in grace' before God and man, as His stature became taller, His arm stronger in His foster-father's work, as His words gradually changed from childlike melody of untaught innocence to the fuller harmony of manhood's maturity and depth, as brighter and more frequent rays of the Divinity gleamed through the material clouds of His mortal presence, what was it all to her who watched with more than the intelligence of an archangel, who sympathised with

all the fondness of a perfect Mother's heart, and who reverenced her own Child-God with all the humility of a perfect creature's adoration? What was it all to her? What to Him? To both, it was one life, in which even the tiniest trifles of each passing hour, like little silken threads of love, bound two hearts together in happiness of home and holiness of Heaven—two hearts, the Heart of the Child-God and the heart of His Maid-Mother.

When the noble Patriarch Joseph died—Joseph, simple as any of the pastoral kings, great as any of Israel's rulers—Joseph, whose name had shielded the honour of God's human birth and protected the innocence of God's Mother—Joseph, whose hands had toiled to win them both their daily bread—when Joseph passed away from their home to rest in the slumber of the saints, Jesus and Mary were left yet more alone.

During all that sweet time of happy home, even though broken in upon by dolorous trial, even though clouded always by the shadow of the Cross, there was one deepening life of joyful mystery. In the warp and woof of pain and pleasure, grief and gladness, tear and smile, two lives were ever woven more and more together—two lives woven into one love—the love of Mother and of Son. Every soft breath of happiness made their affection fonder. Every harsh wind of adversity made their sympathy

still more strong, for the love which is truest and deepest is that which is rooted in pain.

We sometimes lose sight of this truth that, while the Heart of Our Redeemer was, indeed, raised to real union with the Godhead, yet this not only did not dull but quickened its true experience of every noble human feeling, and toned its natural harmony to the touch of every tender human sympathy. The Heart of Jesus is as thoroughly human as it is surpassingly holy. Thus He truly learned the language of a heart. He truly grew in the knowledge taught by the actual tide of emotions which rise in a flood of beating waves, or ebb away in silent sadness within the thrilling souls of men. Christ, as God, is the infinite wisdom of the eternal Word. As man, He had from the first moment of His conception the fulness of the Beatific Vision, the intense brilliancy of angelic understanding, and the most perfect possession of all human knowledge. His sanctity was, from the first, complete; so that through all His human life, He did not gain new knowledge, nor did He advance in holiness. He was always, even as Man, perfect in mind and will. Hence, as the Fathers and Doctors of the Church teach, He did not really grow in inward wisdom nor in inward grace of soul. But before God and man, the workings of His mind and will became outwardly more mature

and more masterful. In one way, indeed, He did learn. The actual experience of human thought and emotion was new to Him. It was for this that 'the Word was made flesh' in order that, with St. Paul, we all might say: 'We have not an high priest who knoweth not how to compassionate our infirmities, but One tempted in all things, like as we are, without sin.' Wherefore, each time that He looked upon His Mother's face, each time that He heard His Mother's voice, a fresh experience of human feeling touched the human thought of Christ, and a quicker throb of warm human blood thrilled within the human Heart of God. He was growing thus daily more and more like His brothers of earth that He might thus become, in deeper human pity and in more touching human tenderness, the 'Friend of sinners' and the 'Good Shepherd' of wandering or weary souls.

In solemn or momentous instants of men's lives, the importance of what is present lights up with quick and vivid clearness the many and distant windings of the past. As when the lightning flash reveals through the storm gloom what we had not noticed in the calm of cloudless day, so the sudden tempest of danger and, most of all, the actual presence of death shows, often with terrifying distinctness, what was hidden away in the folds of faded memories or forgotten like a record of simple

days that has been long lost. Again, we all know how realities fraught with woe recall stories full of sweetness; how trials full of peril bring back bright pictures of the past; how the sight of supreme affliction arouses memories of lost love so as to add to the bitterness of grief or the gloom of desolation by keen recollections of details which, however trifling, were yet epochs of happiness to the heart.

As Mary stood beneath the Cross, watching the agony of her own Son, must not the horror of such a death, the awfulness of such a sacrifice, the anguish of such a bereavement have shown with strange vividness to her bursting heart the sights and scenes of long ago? May she not then have remembered the day when she first tardily realised, as mothers will, that the grace of her boy had bloomed into the majesty of man? When in the eventide He was returning home after His daily toil, she had suddenly noticed how He bent His Head to pass under the lintel of the cottage door. As He stood before her then, with the mystery of the setting sun glowing upon His features, with the mystery of the eternal Godhead shining from within His eyes, she realised in startling distinctness, even though she had known it before, that His kingly stature was so much taller than hers who had carried His infant limbs in her arms. She noticed, then, that while she could still recognise the same exquisite melody

of tone which awoke, in His childhood, the tenderest echoes of her heart, yet His voice had deepened into a full rich harmony which made its sympathy strong to uplift as well as sweet to soothe, and gave to His words even more than the human music and human majesty of prophetic power. Now, now, as she looks up, her kingly Christ is dying the death of a felon, her darling child is nailed to a gibbet, her adorable God is blasphemed! Was she not His Mother? Was He not her Child, her own, and only hers? Now, that beauty which her Mother eyes had so lovingly dwelt upon is torn and mangled with bitter wounds, purple-stained with precious blood, disfigured with bruise and spittle, rent asunder by fierce pangs, exposed in shame before His Mother's eyes! Now, that voice, sweeter than song of bird or angel, which her Mother ears had so lovingly listened to, is panting in hard gasps of stifling pain and choking blood and parching thirst! Now, now that the beautiful and most innocent Life of her life is dying so sore a death, so shameful a doom, she His own Mother may not even wipe away the blinding blood from out His eyes, nor moisten His burning lips with water or with her tears! Does she remember now, beneath the Cross, the dawning of her Motherhood? Does she remember now the unutterable happiness which hushed her heart in a rapture of Heaven when she

first felt the human Heart of her Babe throb against her own? Does she remember now the moment of mothers' recompense when, from little lips that rippled into smile of sunshine, love for the first time spoke, in infant accents, saying 'Mother!' Does she remember this now? Listen, Mother! He will speak to thee again. Listen! He may call thee, Mother. Listen! 'Woman, behold thy son!'

Heart, heart, heart that is breaking! Mother most dolorous! As thou dost stand beneath the Cross, with the sight of thy Son's agony transpiercing thy soul, with the sound of thy Son's death-struggle bewildering thy sense, with the red rain of thine own Son's blood steeping the dead wood of the Cross, bathing the living marble of thy face, Mother most heroic! canst thou sacrifice thy Son? Canst thou immolate thine own most pure love, thine own most sacred tenderness? Canst thou, heart of the Virgin-Mother! give up thy Son, even before He dieth, and, in His stead, take unto thy love the sinners that slew thy Child? O Mother of God! wilt thou be a Mother to the sinner?

'Woman, behold thy son! Son, behold thy Mother!' Through blood and tears, Jesus looked down upon His Mother. Through tears and blood, Mary looked upon her Son. Their eyes then met in one long, last look of love. Her answer was in her

eyes. The Mother of the Crucified opened her most pure and tender heart to the children of sin and shame.

With Mary, the Mother of Jesus, there stood beneath the Cross John, the beloved disciple, type of innocence that has been preserved by love. Near Mary the Maid-Mother, but bowed to the earth by an anguish of shame and sorrow, wept Mary the Magdalen, type of sin that has been redeemed by love. John the virgin, Magdalen that had been a sinner, and all the children of Eve that have been blessed in innocence or ransomed from wilful guilt by the blood of Christ, became children of Christ's Mother at the foot of the Cross. Henceforth, that nobility of pity, that heroism of tenderness which gave the Mother of Jesus strength to stand beneath His Cross, has given her sympathy to stoop in order to lift up and to love all the souls for whom He died. She is our Mother now, our very own. Therefore, does she love us, not with such vague and general care, not with such wide and universal benevolence as loses in intensity what it gains in abounding kindliness; but she loves us with a personal love, with the particular and attached fondness of a mother for the children of her heart. Were she only a gracious queen, were she only a woman of kind and noble heart, we might not all hope that each could own a place in her affections, secure

against rivalry, sacred against jealousy, steadfast in faithfulness that cannot fail nor change, warm in friendship that cannot cool nor languish. But Mary is more to us than gracious queen or noble-hearted woman. She is our Mother. For Jesus gave His Mother such strength and sympathy that she should share with each of us, His brothers, that very love which bound her heart in human tenderness to His. Thus Mary feels towards each one of us a true Mother's love.

Shall we not, then, reverently love her? We are the children of her most pure and gentle heart, since He first gave us to her care, Who loved us from the eternal day, and Who, when dying for our sake, while all His Heart's best blood flowed forth, left to our love what He loved most on earth, His Mother, saying: 'Son, behold thy Mother!'

FOURTH WORD

My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'
MATT. xxvii. 46.

IN our human life, we all must meet with hardship and with trial. But wintry as may be the winds of adversity, bitter as may be the breath of selfish interest that blights our hopes, dreary as may be our own outlook over the world around us, yet, these we can bravely face or bear with patience, if at times, under a roof-tree brightened by the sunshine of kind smiles, gladdened by the warmth of devoted hearts, we can seek shelter from harsh sounds and dismal sights, to rest in our happy home.

Even should the hearth-stone be laid desolate, even should the friendship of nearest and dearest fail in love or fade in death, yet, while there remains the strength of youth or the steadfastness of healthful age, there is hope in the blood and vigour in the arm. Thus while a tear may dim the eye, or a sigh quiver on the lip, or a smothered sob convulse the breast, yet the step is steady and the hand strong. We are still able to dare the battle of life.

When the very source of strength is chilled, the pulse faint, the nerve feeble, all material power yielding under the creeping palsy of decay, all material promise waning before the gathering shadows of the tomb, yet, within the soul itself, there may remain the light of a clear mind and the energy of a noble will. Then the frame may sink, but the spirit still survives.

When the calm of conscious honour and the serene joy of duty done are undermined from within by phantoms of a sick brain, or by haunting memories of unburied wrong, or by shameful secrets of sin, yet, even then, the humbled soul may creep for comfort to the foot of the Cross, and sob itself to sleep that soothes, in the arms of the mercy of God.

But when, in the debasing drudgery of unrequited toil, or in the wretchedness of hopeless want, or in the melancholy of ruined life, or in the abandonment of comfortless age, the body is racked by physical pain, and the soul tortured by mental agony ; when there is no help without and no hope within ; when selfish strangers are many and cruel ; when friends forsake us, one by one ; when we have gained by the labour of our lives only the lamentable experience of failure ; when we have won with all the wealth of our love only the contemptuous laughter of treachery ; when our thought is confused,

bewildered, blank; when our will is weak, cowardly, dismayed; when all the sins of our youth rise up in judgment against us; when the barrenness of age alone is left; when the consolation we once had in prayer is dried like the summer dust of highways, withered like the winter leaves of woods; when the very light of Faith is dark, and the very hope of Heaven gone; when we are utterly forsaken; when we are utterly alone; when we can touch nothing that seems solid, grasp nothing that seems substantial; when we are alone: alone, midst the surging, swaying, tumultuous waters of woe; alone, alone, in the darkness; alone, alone, hurried and hurled blindly, helplessly, hopelessly, through sorrow and suffering, towards an abyss of threatening horror: then, indeed, our soul is in desolation; then, indeed, we have need of God.

Pause for a moment to look at the picture of Our Saviour's life, as it is painted by His Prophet: 'He shall grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a thirsty soil; there is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness; and we have seen Him, and there was no sightliness. Despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity; and His look was, as it were, hidden and despised.'

Born in a stable, while the harsh winter winds howled and hurled around Him, while the snow-

laden air numbed His infant limbs, the King was laid on the straw of a manger. From Bethlehem, hurried away, homeless, into the exile of Egypt; from Egypt, brought silently back to be buried alive in the dreary, monotonous toil, and wearisome waiting of Nazareth. King and Prophet, when at last Christ went forth on His mission, the sad and the wretched came to Him with their grief and their sickness; 'but no man offered Him comfort.' He healed them all and consoled them, scattering graces and bestowing blessings at every step of His way; yet no man offered Him gifts. As long as the day lasted, they took His favours. When the night came, they went away to their rest; yet He 'had not whereon to lay His head.' Poverty, want, toil, insult—these were the daily bread of His life; yet, these were only outward types of the deep-abiding sorrow of His soul. Remember that He had a true human nature, with human thoughts and human feelings; then, think how all the wisdom of His great mind and all the nobility of His high will were imprisoned in the utter loneliness of unappreciated worth, or were thwarted, strained, jarred against, rudely trampled upon or painfully ignored by the low stupidity, or by the coarse selfishness, of the characters which clashed ever against His own. He suffered all the dreariness of intense energy fettered in useless inactivity. He

suffered all the disappointment of intense activity resulting in constant failure. Remember that He had a true human Heart, with exquisite delicacy of emotion, with most gentle, most tender sympathies ; think, then, how no man really loved Him. One heart there was—near, indeed, and dear unto His own—one heart that understood Him well and loved Him fondly, a heart so pure, so noble, so true, and so devoted, that never was creature's like to it, a heart that was all for Him, His Mother's ; yet, oh, strange, sad mystery of sympathy ! Her heart, His own Virgin-Mother's heart, brought Him bitterness. His Heart went out to hers, only to feel, with wonted sympathy, all the sufferings of His own Passion intensified by the compassion of her dolours. Thus the union of their love plunged them both into ever-thickening darkness and into ever-deepening desolation, as the day of His doom drew near.

The shadow of the Cross was never lifted from Our Saviour's life. Therefore, did He, by His Prophet, utter this wailing cry of a heart sore-sick with waiting for the slow coming of grief and the threatening stroke of woe : ' From my youth, am I made ready for scourging.' ' Reproach and misery hath my heart waited for.'

When the shadow of the Cross had changed into the reality of the Crucifixion, the cup of Our Redeemer's human bitterness was full. Hear His

plaintive answer to the question of the Prophet: 'Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, this beautiful one in his robe, walking in the greatness of His strength? I that speak justice, and am a defender to save! Why then is thine apparel red, and thy garments like those that tread in the wine-press? I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the Gentiles, there is not a man with me. I have looked about, and there was none to help; I sought, and there was none to give aid.' 'I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort me, and I found none!'

The scornful scroll of His rejected Kingship fastened above His head, the scornful crown of His mock triumph clasping His brows in its throbbing agony, nails upholding His body in torment of suffering and in torture of shame, Jesus Christ hung upon His Cross. Every wound wept bitter blood-drops. Every fibre of His flesh burned with the hot fire, and thirsted with the panting fever, of inflammation. Every nerve leaped with darting spasm, or quivered with long-drawn pang. Every bone ached with the crushing stroke or wrenching shock of bruise or jolt. Beneath Him, the Roman soldiers coarsely jested as they cast lots for His garments. Around Him, wide, wide around, the far-stretching multitudes of His own people howled

or hissed in hate. 'They are multiplied above the hairs of my head, who hate me without cause. My enemies are grown strong, who have wrongfully persecuted me! O God of Israel. Shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger to my brethren, and an alien to the sons of my mother.' Every feeling of His nature was relentlessly and remorselessly outraged. Every sympathy of His Heart was broken by contempt, shattered by shame, immolated by sacrifice. All His strength drained away, all His powers paralysed, the weakness of death and the fainting of terror were laying hold on His soul.

Worn, wearied, exhausted, utterly prostrate through pain, utterly powerless through horror, the vigour of His mind is ebbing fast away. His human brain is bewildered, dismayed, distraught. His human will seems to faint into stupor, frozen by the touch of death. Then, oh, at such a time! sin crowds into His soul, as though His Heart were its home. Sin rushes in upon Him, riotous, exultant, triumphant, horrible! Against it, His feeble faculties struggle in convulsive fright, in the throe and confusion of body and soul that are being wrenched asunder; yet He cannot cast out sin's swarming sights and shapes and sounds, for He has taken the place of the culprit. He is the Victim of sin.

Ever, until now, in the midst of His sorrow, in the depths of His tribulation; ever, until now, the serene light of His Father's face had shone upon the inmost soul of Christ. Ever, until now, the unutterable calm of His conscious innocence had remained unruffled. Ever, until now, an immovable trust had upheld His human nature with a share in the strength of God. Now, the light is fading, the trust troubled, the strength ebbing away. Gloom spreads over His soul. In the night, His mind is still present to the unveiled splendours of the eternal Word. In His death-struggle, His will still stands firmly with the consciousness of the Beatific Union, with the security of the vision of the face of God.

Listen to His dying prayer echoed by the Psalmist: 'O God, come to mine aid: O Lord, make haste to help me! Thou knowest my reproach and my confusion and my shame. I am poor and sorrowful! Save me, O God, for the waters are come in, even unto my soul! I stick fast in the mire of the deep, and there is no sure standing. I am come into the depth of the sea; and a tempest hath overwhelmed me. My prayer is to Thee, O God. Draw me out of the deep waters! Let not the tempest of water drown me; nor the deep swallow me up; and let not the pit shut its mouth upon me! Hear me, O Lord, for Thy mercy is kind; and turn not away Thy face from Thy servant; for I am in

trouble. Hear me, O Lord. Cast me not off, when my strength shall fail ; do not Thou forsake me ! '

But, now that all the strength of earth has crumbled, now even the support of Heaven seems suddenly to give way, when, with a quailing of human fear, with a quaking of human terror, with a reeling of human feebleness, with a shuddering of helpless awe, with a panic of hopeless despair, He feels the foundations of truth trembling and tottering beneath Him, as the very vision of the face of God appears about to vanish from the straining clasp of His soul. The vision is shadowed. His broken heart and darkened soul are left alone. He is alone ; alone with sin ; alone with horror ; alone with failure and despair ! Life is gone, and death seems useless. Bereft of all ; forsaken ; with none to help or pity Him, forlorn ; abandoned even by God ; alone, alone, alone ! Out of the depths of darkness, out of the abyss of despair, pierces the cry of His desolation : ' My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ? '

From the desolation of Our Redeemer, learn the true lesson of human life. We have need of God.

Ah, do not think that those bright tints and fairy colours, which often linger round the dawn of life, shall last into the day when the time of toil and hardship comes. Youth is so full of promise,

and so flushed with hope, so buoyant with its own feeling, and so trustful in its own thought, that all things which it looks upon seem to be lit up with everlasting sunshine, and to be true with solid and enduring worth. Ah! the springtime of life is the time of flowers, the time of genial warmth and fresh breeze, the time of budding hope and growing strength, of enthusiastic thoughts and ardent aims. But the springtime passes, and the winter comes: sooner or later it must come. Then, all that was fair and bright and beautiful shall become sere and pallid and withered. Fallen hopes, like dead leaves, shall strew the ground. Memories, like winds that blow over barren places, shall mutter mournful messages of failure and disappointment. There shall remain no sap within your strength, no vigour in your will, no fruit from out the past, no bloom upon the present, and, in the future, no sympathy. All shall have become dull, spiritless, cold, hard, dreary.

Every human heart must have its winter. If your life has not yet been blighted, remember that you have still to pass through winter trial before you die. What will you do then? If in the springtime you have given yourself up to thoughtless and reckless pleasure; if in the bright, sweet days of joy you have lived as though these should always last; then, when the winter comes, with its sorrow

and sterility, with its darkened sky and hardened soil, with its gloom and its desolation, you shall be very mournful; you shall droop, if you do not die; you shall be left alone. Oh, learn the lesson of human life! Even when the strength of youth fails with years; even when experience of sadness and evil ought to have taught us wisdom; we remain childish lovers of the passing world. Even age clings to shadows when the substance has crumbled away. Even age lives in dreams of flowers that are faded, and of hopes that are long since dead.

Learn, then, the lesson of human life before it is too late! Learn it by calm meditation in the time of youthful promise. Learn it by trustful humility in the time of mature peace. Learn it while your thoughts are clear, while your will is vigorous. Learn it before the winter-time, before your soul is shrouded in desolation, before your heart is left alone.

You have need of God. Let this truth grow with your growth; let it twine round all your aims; let it win its way into all your love! It will give you grace in time of gladness; in time of sorrow, strong support. Thus shall your happiness be always brightened by the glorious sunshine of God's benediction. Thus shall your sadness be always sweetened by the blessed balm of God's sympathy.

'Man is full of many miseries.' Above all things else in life, your heart has need of sympathy, and your soul has need of strength. You will find both when you weep at the foot of the Cross of Christ. His infinite pity stoops towards you; His warm human Heart is open to you. Love Him, and you shall never be left alone. He loves you. He loved you first, and He loves you most.

FIFTH WORD

'I thirst!'—JOHN xix. 28.

WE have read sad tales of shipwrecked mariners, lost upon the wide wilderness of waves. We have shuddered at the story of their sufferings as they were slowly perishing in the pitiless calm of the torrid zone. The sky above them flashed and glittered like burnished brass, overwhelming them with deluge of furnace heat and piercing them with rays like arrows of fire. The sea around them glowed and heaved like molten metal, mocking them with the ceaseless sound and liquid motion of water they could not drink. As they were slowly dying upon the bosom of the burning sea which gave them a fathomless depth and boundless space of water that was salt; as they were slowly dying beneath the arch of burning sky which gave them no canopy of cool cloud, but only the scorching splendour of the blazing sun; all the tortures of their death-agony were absorbed into the one terrible delirium of thirst.

We have heard of travellers wandering over an ocean-like waste of desert, thirsting. The hot ground yielded to their steps, for it was dry, parched, shrivelled into powder-like dust, with thirst. The sun glared down upon them with fierce thirst; drinking the moisture from their clothes; drinking the softness from their lips; drinking the liquid tenderness from their eyes; drinking the living coolness from their frame; drinking the tempered freshness from their blood, until all that they touched was palpitating with hot thirst, until they were themselves aflame with thirst. The breeze blew upon them with thirsty breath, whirling around and about and through them an atmosphere of sand that was hot and parched with thirst. The mirage in the distance held up before their eyes visions of shades that were green, of shadows that were cool, of streams that were flowing with water, while they themselves were panting in the fire of thirst. Sparkling springs of delicious coldness, rippling rivulets of exquisite purity, murmuring wavelets of overflowing rapture called in phantasy on their thirst. In the desert, all was athirst. Their thirsty eyes were straining. Their thirsty tongues were speechless. Their thirsty lips were seared and seamed. Their thirsty lives were burning through their burning bodies. Their thirsty brain was dreaming, their thirsty will delirious, in a death of thirst.

We have seen the thirst of fever, when the sufferer tossed in the throes of living fire, his hot eyes hard and glazed with heat, his hot hands tremulously throbbing with burning blood, his hot lips dry and cracked like bare and barren ground that is baked and blistered by sultry drought, his hot tongue powerlessly clashing in inarticulate effort to ask for water to drink. If you have ever seen one that was smitten with fever strain and clutch in convulsive eagerness to soothe with the delicious luxury of cold water the scorching and consuming frenzy of inward fire, then you will have for ever after in your mind a picture of the agony of thirst.

Thirst is an instinctive vital craving for cooling liquid, caused by the excessive absorption or insufficient supply of that natural moisture which the human body needs. It may be the result of outward heat which dries up a frame that cannot be refreshed with drink. It may be the result of inward heat, called fever or inflammation, which burns out life in a fire that has no flame. It may be the result of inward fire, when the blood, which is the liquid food of life, is drained away, so that the source is sealed, the very fountain of all vital moisture dried to dust and heated to burning. That thirst is terrible which comes from scorching sun or desert sand; yet, it cannot kill until it sets the frame

itself on fire. The thirst of fever, when not allayed, is worse; yet, it is always lessened by the liquid filtering of the blood. The thirst that is of all the most intense is that which leaves the fever free to flash through the inmost pores and veins of life, when from these the blood of life has been quickly and thoroughly drained.

The most dolorous Passion of Our Redeemer had been begun by that sadness unto death which had convulsed His Heart in such sore strain of anguish that its warm blood burst in a crimson tide of tears through every pore, and moistened the very ground beneath Him with dew-drops of adorable love. Through the long night of exhaustion and horror that followed, the silent fire of fever had been fanned. At the pillar, the stinging scourges had cut their cruel way deep down into the living flesh, sucking out first the bright red wavelets of the veins, then opening the flood-gates of the arteries until heavy masses of purple outwelled into dark pools round the feet of the Lamb of God! The thorns pierced into His brain for blood. The stones on the road to Golgotha tore and mangled His feet for blood. The dust on the way reddened into dense clots with blood. The nails dug through and through His hands and feet, making wide chasms for lingering blood. As the Magdalen clung in terror and grief to the Cross on which her sins had

fastened the Christ, her tears were softened by red rain-drops of mercy, and her hands were washed by the flood of love outpouring from the Heart of Him that had pitied her.

While this drain of blood dried up from within, the very source of Our Saviour's human life, His wounds, with wide gasp and burning lips, panted in feverish heat. The fire of inflammation shrivelled up every fibre, and flashed along every nerve. Like cataracts of flame that rush inward from without ; like tongues of fire that dart outward from within ; like delirious fever that pants and reels and rocks in paroxysms of frantic heat, all Christ's fibres, nerves and sinews, all His human soul and body—dried and seared and charred and burning—shrill forth in an instinctive shriek of torture, in a wailing cry of agony : 'I thirst !'

There is such a thing as thirst of heart. What is a heart ? It is an organic structure made of matter, which with alternate beat and pause drives the blood strongly through the body, and drains what is not thirstily taken up by the frame back again to its central source. A human heart is more than this : for, with the outward flow of its red life-currents, there flush forth the strong throbbing waves of its tenderness, and, with every ebb of its blood and silence of its stroke, there is felt a sinking need of sympathy, a withdrawn longing for love.

A heart is made of matter ; and so it can be pierced by the point of a sword, or crushed by the shock of a weight, or crumbled by the touch of decay. Yet, within it dwells, in unity of substance and of life, the feeling of sense and the answering action of spirit ; and so, it may be wounded by a word, or broken by a look, or it may droop and die under the chill influence of neglect. Thus when the heart is strong, the spirit is brave ; when the heart fails, the spirit faints ; when the soul is sad, the heart pines ; when the soul needs help, the heart yearns for sympathy ; when the soul loves, the heart thirsts.

The thirst of the heart is an instinctive longing for affection, and is caused by a human need of human sympathy. If there be no such thirst, the heart is hard, and therefore inhuman. It may have the life of animal sense and material pulsation. It has not the life of human feeling. When this heart-thirst is inflamed by the fire of a great love, it has an eagerness more swift than that of famine, an energy more intense than that of fever. When this heart-thirst is parched by disappointment, when it is wounded and writhing beneath the bitter strokes and thrusts of selfishness, when it is drained of all freshness, hope, and solace by cruelty that starves or by ferocity that slays it, then, indeed, the pangs of this thirst are keener than those which

rack the castaway dying between the hot sun and the salt sea; the pantings of this fire are more harrowing than those which burn the wanderer dying between the mocking mirage and the desolate desert; the paroxysms of this agony are more horrible than those which rend a life in twain between the outward fire of inflammation and the inward fire of fever.

God's own hand fashioned the heart of the First Adam. God's own love shared the warmth and life of the heart of the Second Adam. The Heart of Christ is the living home of the precious blood. It is the living shrine of the human love of the Word-made-Flesh.

The Heart of Christ, with every beat of its warm blood, thrilled with human tenderness, swelled with human sympathy, sank with human yearning, thirsted with human love. Yet, that deep Heart was drained by ingratitude: 'What have I done to thee, O my people, or why shouldst thou reject Me?' And that great Heart was crushed by sin: 'My very Heart is broken within Me!' Yea, that gentle Heart was outraged by insult: 'And Judas kissed Him.' That loving Heart was pierced by those He loved: 'They have dug my hands and feet. They have numbered all my bones.' 'They shall look on Him whom they have pierced.'

Therefore, all His tenderest feelings, dried and parched; all His most delicate emotions, aching and longing; all His most sensitive affections, straining for sympathy, smarting under their wounds; with piteous plaint and clamorous love, He cried from the Cross: 'I thirst!'

There is yet another thirst, the thirst of soul. The spirit that dwells within us is finite in its faculties, bounded in its nature, shortcoming in its substance. But since it is spiritual in its essence, intellectual in its thought, immaterial in its will, there is no limit to its horizon, and therefore no stop to its desire. Thus, while within its narrow life, it is confined in space, changing with time, imperfect in its qualities, yet, from within its narrow self, its mind reaches beyond all distance, abides with the truths of eternity, and contemplates the attractions of immeasurable worth. Thus, again, the will attendant on such a thought is borne beyond all finite aspirations, is carried away towards infinite aims, and can only rest in the peaceful and secure possession of an All-perfect good. Thought is the measure of will, knowledge the measure of love. We come in the end to know the flaws and faults of finite things, and then we grow weary of them; for our spiritual thought and immortal love must seek further and soar higher to find a nobler sphere and a wider worth. Any object that is finite must,

in the end, become a prison to the love of a spiritual soul. Our love can finally repose in nothing less than God. There is, then, in our soul a quenchless thirst that pants for something more than created charm or loveliness, for something faultlessly fair, for something absolutely and in all ways perfect, for something which is God. This is the true thirst of love.

This thirst may, by ourselves, be turned for solace towards the bitter waters of sin. Then, like those who drink the salt waves of the sea, the sinner's soul ends in madness and agony, though, alas! not, like them, in death. This thirst may be slaked in the 'Fountain of living waters.' But listen now to a strange marvel of the spiritual world: 'They who drink this water shall yet thirst.' When this soul-thirst is refreshed by loving union with God, it gains from thence a new intensity of eager longing to kindle and console other loves with burning yet happy love of Him. The soul that is beatified by the actual vision of adorable Loveliness is inflamed, though not consumed, by this sacred fire. The soul that still toils on its pilgrimage to Heaven may yearn with unutterable pain, and may suffer a very martyrdom of charity, through its holy agony of thirst for the salvation of souls; for a soul that loves God thirsts, in proportion to its love, with intense desire to refresh souls that are dying in the

delirious fever of sin, and to rescue them from falling into the eternal thirst of the fiery furnace and of irreparable loss.

The soul of Jesus longed for our love with the deepest yearnings of His human tenderness, with the loftiest energy of His spiritual will, with the supernatural heroism of His transcendent charity, with the personal influence of His most loving Godhead. Therefore, from the innermost depths of all His human nature, with the uttermost force of all His human power, came the cry of His agony, the death-wail of His loving soul: 'I thirst!'

On Good Friday, beneath the Cross, we may unveil the tenderest emotions of our heart, and speak the deepest secrets of our soul. Let me then reverently tell in words what, underneath all that men can see or know of you, is truest and strongest in your life. Let me tell it all in one word: a word that, however calm the countenance, however composed the outward mien, may be, thrills with resonant echo and forceful vibration through every chord of your nature—Love! You may sleep or you may toil, you may be busy or you may rest, you may suffer or you may be glad; influences of every kind, from angel form to demon shape, may struggle to fix your destinies; currents of every sort, from zephyr to hurricane, from rippling waters to tempestuous billows, may strive to waft you to haven or

wreck you to ruin ; passions of every hue, from rosiest tint of foolish glamour to thunder-clouds of blackest guilt, may revel or rage above, around, and within you ; yet, there is only one power that can bear your life safely up, or break your life strongly down—Love. Nothing can make or mar your life but love. You have corporal needs, material wants ; you must eat, and drink, and sleep. But when you are refreshed with food, do you want nothing more ? You have your occupation, business, or profession. You have your amusement or your work. But when you have laughed enough, do you want nothing more ? When you have reasonable wealth, when you have achieved fair success, do you want nothing more ? Through and beneath all this outward life, is there not a life within ? However you may try to hide or harden it, have you not got a heart ? Does it not beat ? Is not its blood warm ? Ah ! your heart has its own thirst. It thirsts for love.

Now, you know well that all foolish love is fickle, that all wicked love is false, and in the end bitter, very bitter. You know that the birds or brutes cannot love, except for the sake of shelter or of food. That is not enough for you. You know that all your sympathies which are sincere, all your emotions which are pure, all your affections which are noble, need for their support and require for their freshness

the strength and sweetness of a holier love. Without this, there is no love that is secure. With this, there is no love that is not staunch. All human love is like the brine of the ocean. It will only mock and madden your thirsty heart, unless the sun of charity, the master-love of all, draw it upwards, and send it back in softened dew from Heaven.

You need yet more. Like flowers that turn ever towards the sun and pine away in colourless death if shut in from the light—like trees that spread their branches out to breathe the freshness of the air, and change their waving strength to splintering wood if cramped down from the sky—so the immortal faculties of our soul must turn towards God for light and life. They need truth and they need love. If they have them not from God, they wither and are warped. This is their thirst, a thirst that is a love wide as eternity, deep as infinity. They thirst for God.

Yet, 'Be astonished, O ye heavens! at this: and ye gates thereof, be very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have done two evils. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and they have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. And now, what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the troubled water? And what hast thou to do in the

way of the Assyrians, to drink the water of the river? Thine own wickedness shall reprove thee, and thine apostasy shall rebuke thee. Know thou, and see, that it is an evil, and a bitter thing for thee, to have left the Lord, thy God!'

Ah! without the love of God, all other love will only make you thirst the more. His love alone will never mock, nor weary, nor wreck, nor wrong your love. You are athirst for God. You are athirst for a love that shall arouse and win every impulse of your soul. You are athirst for a love that shall content your noblest faculties with the perfect peace of spiritual energy, and crown them with the perfect activity of angelic rest. You are athirst for God.

Think, then, how He loved you first. Let the wild play of your fancy pass back through the distant recesses of ages, let your imagination flash through the cycles of years back to the infant hours of Creation, let the angelic ken of your intellect gaze upon the furthest possibilities of time; yet, before all time that was or might be, there was the ever-perfect, ever-present abiding and immutable moment of eternity, and in that eternity, before all beginning, God loved you. He loved you first. He loved you most. For God did 'bring Himself to naught, taking the form of a slave.' From out of His eternity, He was born in time; from out of His

infinity, He became a child; from out of His beatitude, He took a throbbing human heart and a suffering human soul for you.

This is no idle dream of love; yet, you may dream the fondest dreams of love, but you cannot dream of love like this. This is no vague and vanishing vision of love; yet, you may see the shining stars and speak with the spirits of love, but you can never soar to love like this. This is no idle dream, no empty vision of love; for, lo! it is for you God lived a human life of love, and died a death of human love. Behold His love upon the Cross! His feet are nailed, that they may never turn away from you. His hands are nailed, that they may never close their wide embrace to you. His Heart is pierced, that all its blood may flow for you. He is all wearied, seeking for your love. He is all wounded, dying for your love.

O Christ! O God of Love Incarnate in a Heart of love! O Christ! I plead the cause of Thy great love, Who didst love them first, and Who dost love them most. Yet, all my words fall idly on their ears, and all my thoughts strike vainly on their souls. Do Thou, O King of love! O Crucified Love! O Jesus Christ!—do Thou, from Thy Cross, touch their hearts and thrill their souls with Thine own word of love: 'I thirst!' Amen.

SIXTH WORD

'*It is consummated!*'—JOHN xix. 30.

As intellectual truth consists in an accurate image of the real world, reflected from the living mirror of our mind, so, when our practical life is a faithful picture of the harmonious order existing within our soul, when our free thoughts and words and actions are fitting reproductions, in fact, of the right relations in which our personal nature stands, then there arises the truth of moral worth. What is thoroughly true to nature is right and good.

What the blind force of their nature does for creatures less noble, giving them strength, or giving them gracefulness, making them serve in lowly use, or crowning them with a magnificence of beauty—that, the free choice of our own will should do for us. Our life guides its own growth, develops its own power, fashions its own perfection, creates its own loveliness. Our use, our excellence, our worth, are self-given, under God.

Wherefore we shall indeed prosper, and become

'like a palm tree that is planted by the waters, bearing rich fruit in its time,' if, by truth of reason and by worth of will, we work out and realise in our actual lives the glorious possibilities of angelic innocence and of human harmony which exist within our souls.

Thus, as from our parents we have received the warm blood that throbs within our heart, so do we owe them, ever and always, reverence and grateful love.

But to no creature can we be beholden as we are to God. No creature can stand so near, so close, to our own soul. No creature can claim rights as sacred. No creature can put forth such endearing titles to our tenderness.

This is the source of every obligation; this is the foundation of all right; this is the beginning of all justice; this is the primal reason of all religion. Wherefore our first right is to the fulfilment of a duty. Our highest use of freedom is in the rendering of our filial homage to our Father Who is in Heaven. Our noblest work in life is in the service of the King. Wherefore, again, above all else and before all else, we are bound to recognise, in thought and deed, in word and work, our submission to the first principle of truth, our dependence on the first principle of fact, and our obedience towards the first principle of worth. We are bound

to bow, 'in spirit and in truth,' in worship before God.

Now, this is only done, with fitting perfection and with becoming fulness, when there are joined together, in one great act of human adoration, both the spiritual submission of our soul and the material reverence of our action, both the inmost devotedness of our heart and the outward offering of our gifts. Hence the supreme act of human worship consists in sacrifice.

Sacrifice is the making sacred of some gift, which, in recognition of His divine dominion, and as token of our dependent homage, is laid upon God's altar. It is a practical proof, an actual exercise, in human form and human figure, of religion; for it is the consecration of an offering, as symbol of ourselves, to the service of the All-holy. The offered gift takes the place of those who offer it; and the acceptance of their gift is a sign of God's favour granted to earnest worshippers.

The guilt of man gave sacrifice another, and a sadder, form. It became an offering of atonement, a sacrifice for sin. Its outward sign was now no longer a mere hallowing of gifts, but an immolation or destruction of the victim. Its inward meaning was not only the bowed down reverence due to God's Majesty; it was also the acknowledgement,

by the culprit creature, that it had deserved the chastisement of justice, while it implored God's pity and pleaded for His pardon.

But what was man's sacrifice in the sight of God? Sin was an infinite insult, an irreparable rebellion, an eternal treason, a setting of a creature in the Creator's stead, a soul's dethronement of its King! Could man's worthless work atone for this? Could the blood of oxen wash this stain from out a soul? Could man's life, or could man's death, equal God's honour or weigh down in worth the glory of the Eternal One? No. Man could offer no fit Atonement for his Fall; man could make no redeeming sacrifice for sin.

Yet, if man's merit could not lift him up to Heaven, God's mercy could stoop to earth. God, 'Whose mercies are without number,' 'to Whose mercy there is no bound,' 'Whose mercies are above all His works,' God repaired more mightily still the ruin wrought by sin in what He had mightily made. God's power made man. God's love redeemed man.

Never could creature's wildest wish, never could creature's fondest hope dream of such a Redemption as this! Therefore were the prophets breathed upon by Heaven, that they might reveal in words of wonder, and show forth in sacred signs, mysterious types of the sacrifice of a Saviour, and enrapturing

messages of the King's love. Thus the glimmerings of human hope dawned gently and gradually over the earth, as clearer and clearer revelations lit up, on the brightening horizon, the divine figure of the Christ. God Himself taught man to worship with all trustfulness, and to sacrifice with all love.

Therefore was it that, in the Old Covenant—the Covenant of truth foretold and fact foreshadowed—the fairest and most spotless lamb of all the flock was taken to be offered in holocaust to God. Therefore, as we read in Exodus, the blood of the lamb was sprinkled on the lintel of the door that the destroying Angel, seeing it, might not smite but spare the home hallowed by the innocent victim of the Pasch. Therefore doth Isaias utter divine things of the 'lamb that shall be led to the slaughter,' 'that shall not open his mouth before his shearer.' Therefore doth the Prophet of sadness, Jeremias, cry out: 'I, as a lamb, am meek!' Therefore did the Baptist, pointing to Jesus, fulfil his own mission, saying: 'Behold the Lamb of God!' Therefore did the other John, the John of the loving Evangel, prophesy in almost every page of every chapter of his Apocalypse many marvels of 'the Lamb in Whose blood we are washed and made clean from sin'; of 'the Lamb Who shall conquer the earth'; of 'the Lamb Whom the

Virgins ever follow'; of 'the Lamb to Whom are espoused the souls of the saints'; of 'the Lamb Who shall be the light, the sweetness, and the glory of God's Home.'

Jesus Christ, true Man, and, by the divine unction of the Word, hallowed Prophet, anointed King, consecrated Priest of all the human race, when dying upon the Cross, gathered into one infinite wealth of infinite merit all the sacredness of His life and all the devotedness of His death, offering all His precious blood in the stead of us, poor sinners, for the sake of us, His brothers, in sacrifice to Heaven.

'He was offered because He willed it. He hath borne the sins of many. He hath prayed for the transgressors. He hath said: Burnt-offerings and oblations thou wouldst not. Then I said: Behold I come! He was heard for His great reverence.' Then did Christ, bowing His head, say: 'It is consummated.' His sacrifice was made, and the world redeemed. Our Pasch was offered on Calvary. Our altar was the Cross; and our Victim was the Lamb of God.

'Behold the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world!' Touching type, divine figure, of the Person of the Incarnate Word! Sacred symbol of purity! Endearing emblem of gentleness! It is the sign chosen by Our Saviour's tenderness,

in order to teach our hearts, in homely human language, what He has been, and ever would be, towards us. Innocent as a lamb is the Victim offered for our sins ! Meek as a lamb is the Redeemer of our souls !

When we would render in words our highest ideal of innocence ; when we would speak of a soul that unites in itself the serene loveliness of an Angel-spirit and the tender beauty of a human heart ; when we would picture a purity, white as a snow-flake, floating down from Heaven spotless as the fairest fleece in all the flock, untarnished by the weakness of passion, unruffled by the violence of wrath, unhardened by the selfishness of age, pure as the first blush of the dawn, fresh as the breath of May blossoms on the breeze, fragrant as the earliest incense of a rose, sweet as the first smile of a child, then we say that it is like a lamb.

When we seek for a type of mildness that would do no hurt, of meekness that would work no harm, we look for a fitting comparison to the gentleness of a lamb.

But when we meet with innocence that is ruthlessly injured, of meekness that is relentlessly wronged, of winning grace struck down by wanton cruelty, of gentleness unoffending, unresisting, uncomplaining, beneath the oppressor's heel, then, most of all, we say that it is like a lamb. For a

lamb has neither swiftness to fly from peril, nor strength to withstand attack. It is so guileless as to know no danger; so loving as to fear no foe. Even when wounded, it will not cry out. It will not struggle against the hand that slays it. It will not seek to save its life by piteous moan, or wailing shriek of agony; but, when the knife has pierced its heart, empurpling all its breast with blood, shrouding its mild eyes in gloom, stiffening its gentle limbs with rigid chill, it meekly bows its head and dies.

Like a lamb was the Victim offered, in our stead, upon the altar of the Cross. Our most meek and merciful Redeemer, our most innocent and saintly Christ, our thrice-blessed and holy God, was slain in willing sacrifice for our sake.

All the penalty and punishment, all the pain of expiation, all the agony of Atonement, due to our sins, were laid upon the Lamb of God. Meekly He bore them all. Patiently He paid for all with the divine ransom of His most precious blood, in sacrifice for our sake.

All the sorrow and the bitterness, all the terror, gloom and desolation, of souls that thirst, of hearts that break, of minds severed from the sight of God, of wills racked by temptation or wrenched asunder by despair, were all laid upon the Lamb of God. Gently He bore them all. Tenderly He embalmed

and blessed them with the love of His pierced Heart, devoted in sacrifice for our sake.

All the sins of all the world, in all their hideous guilt and degradation, in all their appalling malice and unforgiven horror, were laid upon the Lamb of God. Yet, He murmured not even at this. Innocent and meek was He, 'like a lamb in the midst of wolves.' With the sweetness of human pity, with the strength of divine mercy, He gave His life and death, His heart and blood, in sacrifice for our sake.

'Behold the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world!' Behold Him, Who for your sake became the Victim of your sin! Behold Him, Who loved you first; Who loved you, when you were present to His thought in all the innocent and exquisite grace of your baptismal beauty! Behold Him, Who loved you most; Who loved you, even when your soul was sullied, and all its loveliness lost! Behold, in spirit, Him, Who loves you now, as truly as He loved you then, when, for your sake, He died in sacrifice upon the Cross! Behold the Lamb of God! And think what will you do for Him?

There must be suffering in every human life. It is the heritage of our race. The mere action and reaction of physical causes brings us often within the grasp of adverse forces which mortal health or strength cannot always withstand. There are

many chances of sickness, many risks of pain, many accidents of evil, many perils of distress, many unforeseen falls from wealth to want, many unavoidable failings of strength or faintings of soul, all of which not one of us can always and ever escape. There are, also, the subtler and keener heartaches caused by the very breathing of that moral atmosphere in which our social life must dwell. Again, there are trial-tests and healthful bitterness sent us expressly from Heaven, lest we should love this world too much, or forget to look eagerly forward to the true happiness that is to come. Furthermore, the all-wise and ever-loving Providence of God has ordained that our salvation and the measure of our glory should depend upon the likeness which we bear to Christ. A Christian cannot be saved without suffering, since Christ was crucified upon a Cross.

There must be sorrow in our lives. Shall there be sacrifice, too? Ah! that depends upon ourselves. If we allow our life to be whirled about by whim, like a leaf that is tossed in the breeze; if we allow ourselves to be carried away by impulse, like a foam-flake that is borne on the bosom of a river; if we abandon ourselves to slothful enjoyment, like the kine that fatten in the fields; if we give way to ignoble terror, like the deer that is startled by the falling of a footstep in the forest; if we follow after

every allurement of sense, because it seems sweeter to sleep like an animal than to watch like an angel ; if we fall down at every brave trial of honour, because it seems easier to be cowardly than to conquer ; if our whole life is lowered to the likeness of a dumb creature that only seeks for pleasure and only flies from pain ; if we are only to be driven by the lash and only to be won with food, then, indeed, there need be no sacrifice in our life. There can be no sacrifice where there is only weakness, irresolution, cowardice, dishonour, shame !

But if you would work out in your own life a true and exquisite picture of those glorious ideals which alone can win your heart's best love, which alone can crown the aspirations of your Angel-spirit ; if you would reproduce, in fact, the greatness and the beauty that exist within your nature, then must you have a will stern and noble enough to refuse what the instincts of your lower feelings might clamour for, a will bold and brave enough to trample on difficulties and obstacles, whether they come from within or from without. You must be prepared to immolate the cravings of passion and the shrinkings of fear at the shrine of truth and worth.

Oh, but if you would lead the lives of Christian men and women ; if you would be Christ's people upon earth, and Christ's glory before the

world, then, oh, then must you be ready to offer sacrifice.

Do not say: 'I cannot!' You mean that you are not always strongly carried onwards by virtuous currents of feeling without effort of your own. You mean that you are not always softly wafted forward by delicious consolations, like summer breezes, while you happily dream of Heaven. You mean that you are not always sweetly constrained by captivating graces so as to know no motive but the enthusiastic joy of being good. This is what you really mean. You mean that you can follow Christ as long as virtue is more pleasant than vice. When trial or temptation comes, do not say: 'I cannot!' Neither blaspheme God by saying that you have not got the grace, but say this: 'Now is the time to show the strength of true Christian hardihood. Now is the time to prove the devotedness of true Christian heart. Now is the time for sacrifice. Now Christ calls; now I will follow Him.'

Listen, Christians, to the emphatic word of Christ. 'If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself; let him take up his cross, and follow Me!' There is a noble life for you: the taking up of the cross, the life of sacrifice! It is the life of one whose soul is robed with the innocence of an angel, even though his apparel be red and his garments

dyed from Bosra ; whose heart is beautiful with the rapture of Paradise Redeemed, even though he has trodden the wine-press. It is the life of one who walks in the greatness of his strength ; whose immortal brows are lit with the light of faith ; in whose eyes there is reflected the happiness of hope ; whose heart beats with all the warmth of love and wealth of blood that is purified and blessed by charity. It is the life of one who walks upon earth without soil, rendering real amidst the frailty and fear of the world the nobility of Heaven. It is the life of one who honestly looks at the truth, strongly works out the good, sweetly comforts the sad, and mercifully lifts up the fallen. It is the life of one who, heart and soul, is devoted to Our Redeemer ; who is virgin enough to follow the Lamb, and soldier enough not to fail or fall until death ; who is a living Revelation of light, and a living lesson of love ; who is a very Christ again in the world ; who is a Christian. Yes ; the life of a Christian is a life of sacrifice, but it is a glorious one, too !

Yet, it is not really a hard life. There is always a serene and robust pleasure in the thorough-going fulfilment of duty. There is always true deep happiness, where there is genuine devotedness of heart. There is always peaceful and triumphant rest when the victory of virtue has been nobly won. There is yet more : a life of sacrifice brings us

nearer, and makes us dearer, to the Heart of Jesus Christ.

Oh, look upon those bleeding wounds, the nails, the thorns, the Cross! Oh, look upon the Lamb of God! Behold His Heart pierced to let His love and blood flow forth for your dear sake! Look! and learn the story of His love! Look! and learn the motive of His sacrifice.

It is now over. 'It is consummated.' Our sacrifice, too, shall one day be completed, and there shall remain only the eternal, boundless, rapturous love of Him, Who loved us first and loves us most!

SEVENTH WORD

'Father! into Thy hands I commend my spirit!'
LUKE xxiii. 46.

WE pass from birth, through darkness, unto death. 'Man, born of woman, liveth only a short time, and is yet filled with many miseries.' All things human weary us with bitterness, and leave us in darkness. All things human are hurrying towards the tomb. Youth sinks into decrepitude. Health wastes into weakness. Beauty shrivels into ugliness. Joy palls with pleasure, or sours into sorrow. Hope grows feverish with fruitless search, or grows faint with luckless failure. Love breaks hearts with heavy blows of denial, or welds them into one with sympathy or with blood, only to wrench them at last asunder with tears and agony. Life in every phase and form, in every bud and blossom, in every flower and fruit, ends in death. A darkness of death hangs over human life: a darkness that shadows our wakeful hours with warning clouds of woe, and shrouds our sleep with the gathering gloom of the grave.

We pass from birth, through darkness, unto death. We pass from mist to cloud, from sigh to tear, from pain to anguish, from sorrow to despair, until we pass away. Through the valley of Paradise Lost, we pass; through one brief span of years, through the dream-land of temptation, through the dread reality of tempest, through a phantom-world without, through a woeful world within, through our trial-time we pass, that we may fix our future fate: that it may appear whether we wish to sell our soul for the wages of sin, or whether we wish to trust it into the keeping of God; whether we wish to lower our spiritual life to the dismal likeness of matter, or whether we wish to stamp even our material life with the sign of resurrection; whether we wish to become idolators of the lying, hateful, and evanescent world, or whether we are willing to accept the heritage of Heaven; whether we wish to cower and grovel, like spiritless slaves or lashed brutes, under the fetters of hell, or whether we are willing to bow, in brave patience, beneath the yoke of Christ. Through our trial-time, we pass. In our trial-time, our choice is made, we seal our own fate. It is the only use of time. Then, in a moment, comes equal, inevitable, swift-striking death.

We pass from birth, through darkness, unto death. The pitiless seasons come and go, the great

universe whirls round with inexorable accuracy, with relentless grinding out of whatever is into what must be, with a ceaseless fabrication of what again is ceaselessly destroyed. So the life of human hearts is an uninterrupted clash and change, where men come and where men go, in a passing dream of days, in a strange short hour of trial, through a crucible of pain and sin, of tenderness and yearning, of despair and sacrifice, of looking ever for some higher hope.

Listen to the word of Wisdom: 'All these things pass away like a shadow; and like a messenger that runneth on; and as a ship that passeth through the waves, whereof, when it is gone by, the trace cannot be found, nor the path of its keel in the waters. Or, as when a bird flieth through the air, of the passage of which no mark can be found, but only the sound of the wings beating the light air and parting it by the force of her flight; she moveth her wings, and hath flown through, and there is no mark found afterwards of her way. Or, as when an arrow is shot at a mark, the divided air presently cometh together again, so that the passage thereof is not known; so we also, being born, forthwith cease to be.'

We pass from birth, through darkness, unto death; from the wailing of our infant weakness, through gloom and tears, through tempest and

lamentation, unto the silence of our stiffening corpse. If we have no hope above our human life, then all is death and darkness! For the hope of the wicked is as dust which is blown away with the wind; and as a thin froth which is dispersed by the storm; and as sand that is scattered abroad by the wind; and as the remembrace of a guest of one day that passeth by.'

Yes, yes; human life that has no thought or trust of Heaven is dark indeed. It is dreary with twilight that thickens fast around it, and it is blindly hurried towards an horizon black with the horror of endless night. From above must come our hope, or we despair and die. We need more than earth can offer. A spirit cannot be satisfied with dust, nor shall our soul be filled with clay. We must look for light and hope for love. Yet, around us the shades are falling fast, while life is crumbling away, and death cometh on apace. Our soul must turn to God. 'From the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my prayer! Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication. My soul hath trusted in the Lord.'

There was, in truth, a light shining amidst the darkness. But 'the darkness did not comprehend it.' Therefore did God send His Word into the world, to bear the message of His great mercy

'to them that were sitting in darkness, under the shadow of death.'

First, came the dawn. As when, in the waning watches of the night, the earliest tidings of the coming day are caught by the sentinel peaks of the mountains, and announced in reflected halos of hope to the valleys that still slumber in gloom; so, in the Old Testament, human characters of heroic loftiness fore-uttered to mortals that were groping in darkness messages of nearer promise, anticipated rays of sunrise, living lessons of the coming Christ.

Abraham, Father of the Faithful, obedient unto the sacrifice of his son; Job, type of divine patience, steadfast in blessing God 'midst the deepest darkness of human desolation; David, lowliest in penitence, noblest in love—these three, priest, prophet, king, spoke unto men a triple message: that they should bow in faith, and hope in trial, and weep in love; a triple message, a triple reflection of one word—'Trust'; a word that shone upon their faces, as they were looking forward towards the coming Light. So they passed away. But the darkness of their life had been touched with sunrise, and their death had been changed to sleep; for 'they had trusted in the Lord.'

Then came the day. The Light of Heaven was made visible in human form. The eternal Truth

was uttered in the gentle accents of a child. Jehovah became Jesus. 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.'

He is our Priest; for 'we have not a high priest who knoweth not how to compassionate our infirmities, but one tempted in all things, like as we are, without sin; that, in what He Himself hath suffered and been tempted, He may be able to succour those also who are tempted.'

He is our Prophet; for at His birth the angels sang of peace, and the last echo of His voice from Olivet was one of blessing and of peace.

He is our King; for He said: 'Whoso followeth Me walketh not in darkness.' And He said: 'Take My yoke upon you, for My yoke is sweet and My burthen light.' And He said: 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life.' Christ is all in all to us. He is the light and the life of the world. He has dispelled darkness, and He has conquered death; for 'in Him was life, and life was the light of men.' Christ is all in all to us.

Christ is all in all to us; but we cannot separate Christ from His Cross. It is by His Cross that He has raised us from the mysterious depths of human darkness and human sin to the mysterious brotherhood of His own light and love. 'When I shall have been lifted up,' He said, 'I will draw all things to Myself.' Thus, through our Crucified

Christ, human life and human death have been redeemed and blessed by the blood and love of God. For all man's miseries that plead for pity, and all man's wants that cry for aid, are summed up in these Seven Words: the ills that waste the body, and the maladies that ruin souls; our heart-needs, and our soul-quests; our weakness against evil, and our powerlessness to atone for guilt; above all, and in all, our need of trusting our soul into the hands of God.

All these have been shared and sanctified by our true brother Christ, our Priest, our Prophet, and our King, Who, from His Cross, the death-bed of His agony, the altar of His sacrifice, the throne of His bleeding love—pronounces, in His last words, all our human woes to be pledges of divine benediction.

He shared our human pain, and won for us divine forgiveness, saying: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

He took our human sin, and gave us divine salvation, saying: 'Amen, I say unto Thee, this day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise!'

He felt our human tenderness, and offered us divine devotedness, saying: 'Woman, behold thy son! Son, behold thy Mother!'

He went through our human desolation, and brought us divine courage, saying: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

He experienced all our human yearnings, and asked us to accept all His divine love, saying: 'I thirst.'

He made our human sacrifice, and gained for us divine acceptance, saying: 'It is consummated.'

He crowned all the teaching of His life by the last message of His death, uttering His prayer of human trust, and His promise of divine watchfulness: 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.'

Look up! Look up! once more before you leave! Look upon Jesus Crucified! Around you, now as ever, there is doubt and darkness. Around you, now as ever, there is vanity and falsehood. Around you, now as ever, there is sorrow, and there is sin. Within you, oh, children, children, feeble and blind!—children that weep, and children that fall!—within you, there is gloom and weakness. Children, you have need of light! Children, you have need of love! Children, children, you have need of God. Pray to our great, good God, the loving Father of men, pray; with the prayer of our Brother Christ, our light in darkness and our hope in death: 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.'

Turn your whole heart and soul towards the Cross, the sign of our Saviour's sympathy that never wearies and of His strength that never fails;

and, as you think of Him, let the disciple of love, who rested his head upon Christ's bosom, speak to you by my voice: 'Let us love Him, since He first loved us.' And 'having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.' Turn your whole heart and soul to Him. He loved you first, and He loves you most.

Now, go back to your daily lives; but never again as before. You have heard His words of love. You have now, and henceforth in your life, a love to live for, the sweet human tenderness, the infinite pity, the divine mercy of Jesus Christ. Love Him, Jesus. Let your eye grow moist at the sweet, sweet sound of His name, Jesus. Let your heart throb with happy, happy memories of His tenderness, Jesus. Let your very soul go forth, in rapturous transports, to meet the call of His love, Jesus. Love Him, and live for Him. In life, in death, put your hand in His, and say with Him to our Father and His Father: 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.'

Go back now to your daily lives; but not as before. Never, never, never forget that He loved you first, and that He loves you most. Amen.

LAUS DEO SEMPER

THE SEVEN DOLOURS OF OUR LADY

'There stood, by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother.'
JOHN xix. 25.

NEVER had fairer flower bloomed upon the earth than was the 'Flower of Jesse,' nor ever had clearer dawn or brighter promise burst through morning clouds, or banished shadows of the night, than when the 'Morning Star' of our Redemption arose upon the world. Never amongst creatures had a glory so serene reflected their Creator's smile, nor ever amongst creatures had a holiness so sublime shone within the highest Heaven; never had nobler knowledge flashed through the spiritual spheres of the cherubim; never had more utter adoration held the thrones and dominations true to the Throne of God; never had more ecstatic love enraptured the burning seraphim than when there breathed and burned on earth the ecstatic soul and loving heart of the Virgin Daughter of Sion. Types there had been before her, types of noble womanhood, types that had foreshadowed her, dull adumbrations of her beauty, faint reflections

of her worth. But Eve was not as fair as she, nor Ruth as gentle, nor Rebecca as lovable, nor Judith as brave, nor Sara as faithful, nor Esther as noble. No ; nor was any one of them her equal, nor were they all other than clear crystals of which each one caught some special ray or tone of the light which shone upon them from her, special charms culled from the anticipated admiration of her loveliness. As in the brightening and kindling light of the prophecies of God's Covenant of Promise, the glory of the Messiah had been through many and different types, lifeless and living, gradually revealed, so had the Ideal Woman been, not merely in dead symbol, or in poetic emblem, or in prophetic vision, but also in actual living form and figure, face and features, soul and heart, character and destiny, pictured, imaged, mirrored, to the weeping yet watchful eyes, to the disconsolate yet hopeful heart, to the frail yet sympathetic souls of the children of Paradise Lost. Christ is the Ideal Man. Christ is God and Christ is Man. Mary, His Mother, is only woman ; but she is the Ideal Woman.

Had the vision of that Ideal Woman dawned upon us, when, in her early maidenhood, the Archangel Gabriel saluted her : ' Hail, full of grace ! The Lord is with thee ; blessed art thou amongst women.' Had we beheld the reverent waiting of

God's ambassador, and the majestic lowliness of the chosen Mother of the Son of God, what kind or manner of life should we, in our human wisdom, have predicted for her? She was the chosen one of her Creator. Even amongst the loveliest and saintliest, she was 'as a lily amongst thorns.' She was the very ideal of innocence; she was the very type of beauty; she was, amongst mere creatures, the masterpiece of God. Exquisite, perfect, peerless, the shadow of Paradise Lost had never fallen upon her; for the choice of God's anticipated Sonship had caught her soul at the first instant of her existence in the hallowed clasp of His hallowing love. Thus as she was, by birthright, the Queen of Nature, so did her Son also give unto her the Queenship of divine grace. Thus she is enthroned as the stainless, consecrated Queen-Mother of our God. What sort of future, should we have fancied, would have shone from dawn to dark upon her human pilgrim-path? The Spirit of God overshadowed her. The love of God came upon her. The Word of God dwelt within her. 'To whom shall I liken thee? Or to whom shall I compare thee, O Virgin Daughter of Sion?' What kind of life will God give to His own most admirable Mother? Shall not ministering angels watch her word? Shall not celestial legions do her bidding? Shall

not all the thronging cohorts of Heaven ward off from her all trial, all trouble, every ill? Shall not all the happy spirits of peace bear her, in eager rivalry of joy, every good and gladsome gift? Shall not her own most loving Son, in the fulness of His love, use the fulness of His power to bless her life with each sweet fruit, and each fair flower of earth, as well as with a cloudless peace and ceaseless rapture, fit harbingers for her of the glory of her coming Heaven? Oh, foolish, idle thoughts of men! Oh, love that is no love, because too hard, too heartless! Could He, Jesus, have told His own dear Mother to stand aside, nor come near to comfort Him in His great sorrow! Could He have bidden her to smile amid sunshine and song while He was weeping, nor ever let her large eyes become clouded with heart-mists, to mingle her tears with the tears that rolled down the cheek of her darling Son? No, no, no; He loved her too much to send her away from Him. He loved her so much that He wanted her sympathy. He loved her so much that He wanted her to be near to Him, nearest to Him in sorrow because dearest to Him in love, dearest and nearest to Him in life, in death, even unto the death of the Cross. Mother of His Heart, she must therefore be the Mother of Dolours. O love that is true! O true

love that must share in sorrow and that must give its sympathy! O Mother of Dolours, teach us to love, like thee, 'The blessed fruit of Thy womb, Jesus.' Mary's life had passed in holy peace and seraphic prayer from childhood unto maidenhood. The 'Flower of Jesse' had bloomed for about fifteen years in deep quiet as well as in most admirable innocence, when God's messenger saluted her as 'full of grace.' In the dawn of her divine Motherhood, joy flooded in upon her soul in ways so full of wonder that the Church still keeps the memory of them as very mysteries of joy. The joyful mystery of the Incarnation made Mary the beloved and most loving Mother of her God. The joyful mystery of the Visitation filled her heart with that sweet ecstasy which most enraptures those who are most bountiful in bearing God's blessings to others, and doing the work of God's love. The joyful mystery of the Nativity placed her Babe within her arms, showed to her Mother eyes the Holy of Holies clothed in that virginal form which He had received from her, gave her the Omnipotence of the King pledged in the tiny hand which she held, pressed to her heart the adorable love of Heaven throbbing within the warm heart of her own Child. Then came the joyful mystery of the Presentation. Moment of

joyful offering! Mystery of happy Motherhood! The doves are brought to the Temple. The Child is presented in the House of His Father. The aged Prophet weeps for joy, and waits for death; for that now his whole life is gladdened and completed by the sight of his infant Saviour. 'Now, O Lord, Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, according to Thy word, in peace, because mine eyes have beheld Thy salvation.' 'A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and a glory to Thy people Israel.' Mystery of joy! Happy Mother! Yet, hearken. The Prophet would speak to thee, Mother. Hearken: 'This child is set for the ruin and for the resurrection of many in Israel . . . and thine own soul a sword shall pierce.'

As when a fair flower of early spring, opening its heart to the kinder sun, spreading its petals out to play with the gentler breeze, is killed by the cruel frost, and, on the morrow, lies with shrivelled stem and blighted bud upon the cold ground; as when an autumn sunset floods the earth with radiance, changing the clouds to crimson canopies fringed with scarlet and with gold, touching the humblest features of the landscape with tenderer hue and softer beauty, reaching to the very secret places of our heart, tinging it, too, with warmer love and brighter promise, lingering even in our dreams with fond reflections of fancy and happy glimpses of

coming peace, yet, from our slumbers we awaken to find the dreary snow helplessly drifting down from darkened and dismal skies, covering all things save the black spectral trees with a shroud of pitiless white; as when a happy home that was hushed in peaceful repose is ravaged and laid desolate by fire, leaving to meet the light of day only blackened piles, smouldering heaps, ashes, ruin, desolation, death, tottering walls and broken hearts, so, when Mary took back her Child, night had passed over her soul, the flower of her joy was faded, her horizon was buried in winter, the home of her human hopes was seared, scorched, burned, ruined by a very fire of grief; her heart was desolate. She had come to the Temple the Mother of Joy; she left it the Mother of Dolours. The point of the sword had entered her soul.

She bears the Child away in her arms. But, oh, how changed are all things now! 'This Child is set for the ruin of many!' The words ring in her ears with a tumult of horror that shakes her very soul with grief. She hears the blasphemous shouts and insults of evil men, resounding all over the earth. From all the deep recesses of ages, the thunder of sin rolls around and over her into futurity. The graves of sin are opened, and hell vomits forth its prey. Demons point to the length and breadth and height and depth of the ruin that shall be

wrought. 'This Child is set for the ruin of many!' Shall He not also be the resurrection of many? Yea; but by His shame, His blood, His agony, His death! Yea; but by their sorrow, grief, and pain, and sacrifice! O Mother of Dolours! The sword hath entered thy soul!

Mary leaves the Temple, but her life shall never be the same again. The point of the sword has entered her heart. Her life is henceforth saddened by her first dolour, the dolour of anticipated grief. Who does not know the sorrow which comes with the nearing shadow of evil? It darkens and chills all present happiness. It hides away all promise in the heavy gloom of its forebodings. It brings a bitter foretaste. It brings no remedy of actual patience under trial, nor of actual contest with adversity. It is real enough to wound. It is not real enough to be grappled with, and overcome. It is solid enough to embitter our pain, and to poison our pleasure. It is shadow enough to escape our grasp, and mock our resistance. As misfortune looms upon us from the distance, its proportions are magnified, its difficulties heightened, all its possibilities of evil appear like actual shadows of coming realities, all its possibilities of good appear like the mocking mirage of the desert. It shuts out light from the horizon, and so unnerves hope. It overhangs the present, and so baffles courage. It

deprives us of the peace of self-reliant trust, and it allows neither the hardy consolation of brave battle, nor the definite resignation of patience under evils that are definitely known. It is a danger that comes in the dark, when our strength is tied, our mind bewildered, our will irresolute. Mary left the Temple with her Child. Her life could never be the same again. A future full of terror slowly grew upon it. The dark presentiments of anticipated grief brooded in silent sorrow over the waiting time of her dolours. The words of doom were fraught with the pain of realities. The shadow of the Cross hung over her Child. The point of the sword had entered her heart.

The thickest clouds, black and violent with menace of approaching storm, may yet gain a strange splendour from the wintry sunset, or catch a reflection of wild and rugged beauty from the breaking of the boisterous morn. Thus, even the shadow of sorrow to come, even the threatenings of impending grief, may be touched by the sad brightness of a smile of sympathy, or softened by the simple charms of a happy home. Thus Mary's soul was soothed, under her dolorous wound of anticipated grief, by the gentle benediction of her life at Nazareth. Soon this consolation was taken from her by the dolour of her desolate home. The home that is happy is so peaceful in its happiness,

so quiet in its joy, that its hours pass by uncounted, its pleasures are not numbered, nor are its blessings weighed. We understand its happiness most when it is lost.

'Take the Child and its Mother, and fly into Egypt.' The words of the angel broke the stillness of the night, and shattered the happiness of the home at Nazareth. Mary hurriedly left her home. Across the desert, through the darkness, away from friends and kinsfolk, from the beloved land of Juda, from amidst God's people, from the Temple of Jehovah, from the roof-tree and its shelter, from the workshop and its wages, from the hearth-stone and its comforts, from Israel to Egypt, to the pagan dwelling-places, to the people who despised her, who abhorred her name and nation, who blasphemed her God, Mary—poor, a stranger—wandered with her Child across the desert, through the darkness, and with the father-like St. Joseph, Mary left her home for exile. But as she travelled fast, in haste, across the desert, the wailing cries of murdered infants and the lamentations of their mothers shrilled across the desert through the darkness, piercing into her very soul. Innocent babes massacred! Mothers mourning over their murdered little ones! In the darkness the vision of this cruel horror followed Mary as she fled from Herod. Why is all that innocent blood poured

out? Why so many children slain? Why so many mothers childless, inconsolable? Why? Mary clasped her Child still closer, with a keener throb of anguish. It was her Child's life that Herod sought. For her Child were all these children slain. The point of the sword had entered her heart.

Across the desert, through the darkness, Mary fled and entered Egypt. Egypt was a land where the luxuriousness of Eastern ease, and the wild laxity of pagan vice, ruled the manners of the people, and led the fashions of the great. Egypt was also a land where, in strange yet deep harmony with crime, a religion of soul-less superstition, and of heartless asceticism, darkly and dismally brooded. Exile in Egypt, to one of God's people, meant not only the loss of all the happy circumstance and help of home, it also meant the ceaseless clashing of contempt or violence, of insult or of injury, against every high thought or noble action of faith, and against every fond memory or kindly custom of the Fatherland. Remember that it is not always the trials which appear heaviest to the outside eye that crush the heart with weightiest load. One trial, however terrible in its one violent strain, may bring less woe than countless trifling trials, whose added blows, with ceaseless and incessant effort, wear strength away or eat like rust into the truest

resolution of steel. Again, a time of tempest does not last. A storm of tribulation may come and burst in fierce havoc, but the storm will pass, and a great calm may come again. But those brooding mists or chill breezes, or every-day patterings of thin rain which last from the spring through the summer into the autumn until they meet the dearth and dreariness of winter, will work more fatal ruin to the harvest than many a lusty yet transitory storm. So it is easier to be brave in battle or patient under a severe wound, when the battle will soon be over or the wound will soon be healed, than keep one's courage fresh and buoyant against multitudinous swarms of stinging trifles that are as exasperating as they are small, and as constant as they are common ; or to keep one's patience calm and trustful through monotonous days, made up of monotonous hours, whose monotonous moments are filled with imperceptible teasings that vex one's very soul with perpetual fretfulness, and harry one's hope with nibblings of nothings that are as unending in their coming as they are venomous in their persistence. What must not have been the dreariness of that exile, the loneliness of that waiting, the prolonged uncertainty of that delay, the ceaseless petty annoyances of each hour, endless monotony of each day, the countless little sufferings that became swollen into streams of

grief, the countless little wants that became opened down into deep dry wells of thirsty dust. Dreariness or desolation, poverty or hardship, isolation or intrusion, neglect or insolence—these are only words that echo stray sufferings brought on Mary by the multitudinous waters of bitterness which deluged her heart during the dolour of her desolate home.

Human life is never one unbroken holiday of happiness, nor is it ever one ceaseless tempest of trial or unremitting time of tears; but as there is night and day, wintry storm and summer sun, so does there ebb and flow with varying wave and changeful current—so does there wax and wane with certain motion and uncertain measure—the tide of human feeling and the climate of the human soul. Thus Mary returned from Egypt to dwell in her home of peace at Nazareth. Oh, how much more dear that home now that it is given back to her! At last her exile days have ended, at last her footsteps tread the rugged road, winding upwards through the hills. At last she reaches the spot where the road winds into the valley, and her eyes rest upon the little village and her cottage home. Oh, home so dear to her desire, so sweet for bitter absence, so much more loved because it had been lost! Her home had for her its cherished memories, its endearing associations, its hallowed ties of kinship, its beloved bonds of holy love, its sacred influences

and divine atmosphere of religion. But home meant more than that to her. It was that spot of space towards which the Heavens stooped, towards which the earth was lifted up. It was that span of time towards which all ages of the past looked forward, towards which all ages of the future should look back. It was the one central point of the universe towards which the sun must turn, upon which the moon must look, round which the stars revolve. It is the one central moment of eternity. It is the one fixed point of energy. It is the one decision of destiny. For it is the moment, the spot, the fact of the meeting, in one life and love, of God and His human Heart. It is the home of God's Mother and of her adorable Child.

All our Lady's life was centred in her Son. Her soul recognised in Him the object of her deepest adoration. Her heart found in Him the object of her tenderest sympathy. Nature and grace made of Him the source and fountain-head whence every freshening influence came, as well as the only end and only aim whither all her thoughts and feelings tended. He was the light of her life, the breath of her existence, the warmth of her heart, the ideal of her fancy, the truth of her intellect, the wish of her will. In Him was all her hope, her light, her life, her love. He was all in all to her, her Creator, and her Child. Without Him! Could there be doom

more terrible, could there be dolour more piercing, than His loss? From the Temple, although her heart was pierced, yet Mary had borne her Child. In Egypt, though her life was drear, yet His presence was with her still. The dolour of anticipated grief, and the dolour of her desolate home, had left her the comfort of His presence. This was taken from her by the dolour of His loss.

It was the Jewish custom that, on their journey to and from Jerusalem at the Pasch, the men and women should travel separately, meeting at the halting-place. The children might go with one band or with the other. When Jesus was twelve years old, returning from Jerusalem, His Mother and St. Joseph missed Him all the way along. St. Joseph, doubtless, will have felt lonely at the absence of the divine Boy to whom he had given all the full and fond affection of a father. yet to his humble soul that absence brought no surprise. May not his thoughts be rendered thus: 'Most fitting indeed it is that the Child should be with His Mother. For what am I, but only a workman who does his work and goes his way? Privilege enough for me that I am allowed with the hard toil of my hands to earn for them their daily bread, that my roof-tree shelters them, that they sit at my hearth-stone. Honour enough for me that I am the guardian of their innocence, and the chosen

shield of their fair name. Happiness enough for me that I am allowed to give them all the love of all my heart, and that they deign to love me. What am I, but only a workman who does his work and goes his way?' Yet, St. Joseph will have looked eagerly forward towards the evening time when his eyes should again rest upon that beloved and adorable Child-face.

Mary, too, will have felt lonely, but her pure, kind unselfishness will have prompted thoughts like these: 'Yes, it is right that the Boy should be with His foster-father, Joseph. Oh, most humble, yet most noble soul! Joseph, last and greatest of the Patriarchs, first and greatest of the Confessors—Joseph, chosen by God to be that heroic character who should mark before the world the time and place of meeting between the eternal Word and His human Heart—Joseph, to whose pure friendship I can fearlessly entrust mine own honour and the honour of my Child—Joseph, mine own revered and beloved father, brother, spouse, how can we repay his care or his affection? Most right it is that my Child's warm gratitude should have led Him to travel with His foster-father.' Yet, Mary's eyes will have eagerly welcomed the shadows that gathered on the horizon, and told them that the time of meeting was near.

At last, they halted. St. Joseph stood before her. His face was eager, expectant, anxious as her own. 'Where is the Child?' 'With you?' —'No.' 'With you?'—'No.' They search amongst their kinsfolk. He is not there. He must have been left behind in Jerusalem. The Boy is lost!

Do you know what it is to feel a chill touch thrill through every nerve, a cold numbness freeze up every vein, a fainting terror paralyse every muscle, a swaying recoiling torrent of blood burst into your heart with tempestuous tumult of agonised emotion, then drain every drop of its life away in a stupor of unrealised grief, while your brain quivers with the intense strain of vivid horror, or reels and sinks in a wild whirl and eddying bewilderment of effortless panic? Can you imagine what it is to be suddenly stunned by unforeseen and utter ruin? Or could you fancy what it would be were all your life so crushed that, in one moment, you had only left to you the mere mechanical action of a heart, whose hope is dead and whose love is lost?

See the pale face of the Mother, as she hurries across the plain back towards Jerusalem. See her peering wistfully through the darkness, straining forward through the night. See her tottering steps struggling against the sharp, shattered stones of the street. See her white lips quiveringly question

the careless or querulous folk that pass. See her large eyes parched with the bitterness of grief, wandering with the restlessness of suspense, inflamed with the fever of search. See them scan every corner, follow every childish figure, scrutinise every childish face. See them grow flushed and brilliant, while her cheeks redden when she hears some hint, or fancies some clue. See them grow faint and glassy, while her cheeks become blanched when she loses the track or finds only a poor Jewish boy who bears a far-off and faded likeness to her own. Three days of fruitless search; three nights of sleepless woe! Three days of active agony; three nights of powerless anguish! Lost! Lost! He is lost to her!

In the character of true womanhood, there are some qualities so refined and so delicate and, withal, so strong, that they command the admiration of all, not merely of ordinary men and women; but they subjugate, in proportion to their more and more dazzling excellence, not only the enthusiastic loyalty of the souls of noble women, but also the more and more bowed-down worship of the souls of men. Quite independently of natural sympathy, and even quite independently of love, the realised type of true womanhood fascinates into strange fondness and conquers into beloved allegiance, in proportion as they are manly, the manliest characters

of manly men. Foremost amongst these refined and delicate qualities, so foremost indeed as to be quite alone in its magnificent predominance, is woman's devotedness in love. Yet, strange and subtle shadow of sunshine, strange and subtle reaction of brightest charm, strange and subtle weakness of highest human power, this devotedness brings its strange and subtle pain and peril. It is so whole-hearted that it fears, with magnanimous foolishness, that it is selfish. It is so thorough that it imagines causes of self-blame when its generosity has failed to overcome impossible obstacles, or when its watchfulness has been unable to avoid an evil which was inevitable. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was a most perfect Mother of all the daughters of our race. Yet, that was the very reason why she will have judged her own conduct according to a more severe and exalted standard of devotedness than ever dawned upon the saintliest or the most loving of other women. Therefore will she have wondered, with what to us, faultful and narrow natures, must appear to be almost unimaginable scruple, whether she had not been remiss. Was not this Child given to her care to be watched, guarded, guided as a child? She had borne Him in her arms. She had nurtured Him at her bosom. She had taught His tiny feet to walk. Motherlike, she had developed the budding instincts of His

infant life. With adorable majesty, and with masterful gentleness, His childhood had budded into boyhood, as He advanced in age and grace and wisdom before God and man. But He is only now a Boy. When she brought Him to Jerusalem, should she have allowed Him to stray away? Was it not her Mother duty to bring Him safely home? Had she failed? Not in fondness, that could never be. But had she failed in the details of the watchfulness of a Mother's devotedness? Lost! Will He never come back to her? Is He gone without warning and without 'Goodbye'? Has some decree of Providence, unknown to her, altered what she understood to be the divine plan of her home-bringing of her Child up to manhood? Has His mission been anticipated, or has her unconscious yet seeming forgetfulness turned her Child's feet into a path that will not lead Him home? Surely this dolour of His loss will have pierced her inmost soul with a point more keen and with an edge more sharp than ever severed limb from limb or heart from life. Surely this dolour was a foreshadowing of the dereliction of her Son upon His Cross. Surely, too, it was a prophecy as well as a preparation that fitted her to be the destined Mother of Pity to those who suffer or who mourn without sympathy, and without hope. The intensity of her anguish is in some faint way echoed in her faltering tones of

mingled wonder and reproach, when, at last, she found Him in the Temple. It was so strange! It seemed so unlike what His dear Heart would do! She knows how fondly He loves her. How could He break her heart! 'Son,' she said, 'why hast Thou acted thus? Didst Thou not know that Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing?' 'Didst Thou not know,' He answered, 'that I must be about My Father's business?' Yes, yes; she knows that well. She accepts it absolutely, she embraces it whole-heartedly; still, to her Mother heart, it is hard to hear this sentence of doom from His lips. He is only with her for a while. This loss is only a prelude to another and a greater loss. The shadow of the Cross is nearing, deepening upon her life. She has found Him, but she must lose Him. He will leave her home, never to come back again in mortal life. The sword has now pierced very deep into her soul.

The finding in the Temple was indeed a joyful mystery to Mary, but it was the last of her great joys. Still, its brightness and its sweetness lingered with her during those happy, even those shadowed, years that He spent with her in their home until the day of parting came. We know how quickly calm and peaceful days will pass. The Boy had grown to the full maturity and majesty of manhood. Soon, oh, how soon! the last year came; then the

last month ; then the last day ; then the last hour. His Mother's arms are round his neck. His Mother's face is upturned towards His, while down her cheeks the big tears flow. Tenderly and sadly His eyes meet hers. 'Mother,' He says ; 'Mother, goodbye !' The word will not leave her heart. At last, from her quivering lips, with a convulsive sob, it comes : 'Jesus, my Child, goodbye !' She sees Him pass down the path among the flowers, along the roadway, till round the distant turning He disappears. A moment she remains motionless, gazing towards the spot where she had seen Him last. Then she slowly turns to re-enter her home. Oh, home that is home no more since the presence, which was its sunshine, has vanished from her life, and all the silence seems throbbing with the tones of His beloved voice, and with the sound of the fatal word 'Goodbye !'

From the finding in the Temple over twenty years had passed when, in our Lady's heart, the gloom of anticipated grief deepened into a night of actual woe. The shadow of the Cross was changed into the reality of the Crucifixion. However dark may be the dread, however bitter the sense of coming pain or desolation, it cannot reach, in its most vivid thought, to the true touch of reality. There is always a new revelation of woe when fancy becomes fact, when the wounds of imagination are

suddenly smitten into writhing feelings, and pierced into a quivering heart, by the sharper edge and keener point of actual experience.

Mary waited by the road to Golgotha. He must pass that way up the hill. In the distance there is a vague sound, with a strange sense of menace and horror, a sound as though a terrible tempest were tearing through trees or as though the maddened sea were hurling itself in desperate onslaught against the rocks. Louder and louder it grows. Nearer and nearer it comes. Ah, no, it is no wind that uproots the woods, no waves that are frantic for wreck! It is a storm of human passion, an upheaval of human guilt. First, a few stragglers come, flung forward and away by the onward impulse of the crowd, like rain-drops before tempest. Then the tide uprises in hoarse, clamorous, furious waves of surging human forms and surging human faces, black with passionate crime, as the billows of hell, seething into white hate like the stinging, venomous, pitiless spray of the ocean. Then the whole flood of the multitude is loosened around her, with thunder of blasphemous uproar, with violence of frantic sin, with laughter like the wailing of demons, with yells against God and curses against man, with foul words flung up from the dregs of iniquitous horror, and, in the midst, an opening—and her Son! Is this her majestic kingly Christ?

Is this her beautiful One, her most beloved Child Is this her Jehovah? It is Jesus. With tottering steps He comes towards where she stands, a figure bent beneath a huge, coarse, wooden cross, with splintering surface and heavy crushing load that eats into His shoulder with every jolt as He, staggeringly, drags His way along. Through the rent robe, the rent and bleeding wounds are seen. A crown of fierce thorns holds His Head in a clasp of throbbing points. The dark, deep red of life-blood and the ashen pallor of death intermingle their hues in vivid and startling contrast. He pauses one moment, lifts His bowed Head and looks upon His Mother's face. She looks upon that face. Through the blood and tears and pallor and woe, she recognises every line and feature. She recognises every thought and feeling of her own Child; she understands, she feels His pain, His agony, His misery, His prostration, His humiliation, His shame. It comes upon her now in unutterable anguish, in heart-rending pity, in excruciating sympathy; it is now no shadow; it is the Cross. One moment, one look, in which their hearts and souls meet. With the fierce frenzy of cruelty, the soldiers urge Him on. One moment, and He has passed up towards Golgotha, up to a felon's death, up to a gibbet of ignominious disgrace and death. Her heart is frozen. It is her dolour of realised grief.

'There stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother.' Do not think that the heroism of her will dulled the sensitiveness of her feelings. Do not think that the sublimity of her sanctity hardened the tenderness of her heart. Do not think, because she was Queen of earth and Heaven, that, therefore, she was less the Mother of her Child. Nay; she was the Queen of Martyrs and she was the Mother of Dolours. As she stood beneath the death-tree of her Son, she knew that He was God. She knew that His own will measured and ruled, with serene precision, every detail of His death. She knew that all these sufferings would quickly pass to be followed by eternal resurrection. She knew all this well. What did she feel? Ah, her heart was as thoroughly human, her feelings were as delicately tender as ever were feelings or heart of a woman, who wept while she prayed, and whose soul was strong, while her very life was crushed by sorrow!

Listen to the gentle and brave St. Bernard, who, uniting in his own heart the tenderness of a child to the spirit of a crusader, may best explain to us the Martyrdom of our Lady: 'The Martyrdom of the Virgin, foretold in the prophecy of Simeon, is narrated in the story of our Saviour's Passion. Truly, O saintly Mother, a sword did pierce thy soul! For, had it not passed through thy soul, it never could have reached the body of thy Son.

Yea, more, when thy most beloved Jesus had breathed forth His Spirit, the cruel lance which opened out His heart no longer touched His soul, which had fled from thence; but thy soul it did transpierce, which from thence could not be torn away. Thus, then, the stroke of sorrow so pierced thy soul that thou mayest, in truth, be called more than Martyr, in whom the agony of compassion far exceeded all pain of bodily death. Was it not more keen to thee than any death brought by cruel steel, that heart-rending word which really reached to the very severance of thy soul and life: "Woman, behold thy Son"? Oh, change! John is given in the stead of Jesus! A servant for the Son! A disciple for his Master! The son of Zebedee for the true Son of God! A mere man for his Maker! How must not this word have pierced thy heart, O Mother, when the mere memory of it can melt even our hard hearts of stone! Wonder not, O brother, that Mary should be called a Martyr because of the sufferings of her soul! Let those wonder who forget that amongst the greatest crimes of the pagan world St. Paul accounts this, that they were "without affection." Far, far, was that crime from the kind heart of Mary! Far let it also be from the hearts of her children. Say not, O brother, Did she not know that He should die? Yea, brother, most assuredly. Did she not then

believe that He would straightway rise again? Yea, brother, most undoubtingly. And yet she grieved at His Crucifixion? Oh, yea, brother, most intensely! Whence, brother, is this strange thought of thine? Dost thou wonder more at the compassion of the Mother than at the Passion of the Son? Nay, nay, brother, since her Son could die the death of the body, surely His Mother could die with Him the spiritual death of a pierced soul, Love, greater than which no one ever had, worked the wonder of the sacred Passion of Christ. Love, like which there has been none since, worked the wonder of the compassion of His Mother.' Thus wrote Bernard the saint of most sweet affection and of most chivalrous reverence for our Lady.

Oh, word of death! Oh, doom of great sacrifice! 'Woman, behold thy Son!' Mary must share in the sacrifice of her Son to save the sinner. She must offer up her own Child, Jesus, in death upon the Cross, and take to her Mother heart the sinners that slew her Son. O sweet Maid-Mother! has it come to this? Was it for this that the archangel brought to thee the message of the eternal Word? Was it for this that thou didst so love and reverence thy Child-God? For this that, when thy whole soul was joined by nature and by grace to His, thou shouldst stand beneath the Cross, and shouldst take thy life and love from out thy heart, and

shouldst immolate them in holocaust, thus sharing in the agony of thy Son's offering by the dolour of thy sacrifice? O sweet Mother, do not despise the sinful children given to thy heart by thine own stainless Son! O sweet Mother, wilt thou not love, for His sake, the children of thy dolour?

There is an intense bitterness of pain caused by the intrusion of common trifles on the solemnity of death. In that awfulness of silence, in that hush of paralysed emotion, which succeeds to the tension and excitement of a last agony, the usual details of duty and the ordinary cares of business appear to mock our grief with cruel profanity, and to break in with heartless noise upon the sacred gloom of a home darkened by death. Have you ever knelt by one dead whom you loved, and heard some boisterous laughter in the street, or heard a giddy footstep on the stair, or heard a complacent murmur of comfortable condolence, or heard the heavy tramp of men carrying a coffin, or heard the matter-of-fact directions given, and the sound of screws fastening down for ever the pale features that you knew so well? What if you had to give such last tender care to the dead as would renew with your own hands the actual knowledge of every pang endured, show again to your own eyes the minute proofs that life is lost? stamp again on your own heart the accurate evidences that dust is dead and clay cold?

They have come to take down the dead body of the Christ from the Cross. Gently, reverently, they lift from off His brows the crown of thorns, and hand it down to His Mother. Oh, how strong, how sharp those splintering thorns, and oh, how red, red with blood, His blood, her blood! From His hands and feet, gently, reverently, they loosen the nails, and hand them one by one to His Mother How long, how hard, how heavy, how coarse, those cold iron nails; how red, red with blood! His blood, her blood! Reverently, gently, slowly, they lower down the dead and give Him back to His Mother's arms. Long ago, as a babe, He had nestled in her arms. Now He rests His head upon her knee; but He is dead. His face is white as the white snow; His eyes are as dull as the dust; His lips are pale and motionless as marble; His very heart is cold as clay, nor beats with love for her, His Mother. Once she had sought Him sorrowing; she has found Him now, but His hand falls heavily from her hold, His head rests heavily upon her knee. Wistfully, wearily, she had longed for His return since He had left her home. Now He has come back to her; but He is dead. She may look upon Him now. She may count those bitter wounds, and moisten with her tears each purple bruise, and red rent, and deep, dark gash. She may fold those gentle fingers. She may close those

dear, dark eyes. She may smoothen back His hair, thick and heavy with crimson moisture. From the beauty of her Child's face, she may now wash the stains of blood and insult. He is given back to her. She holds His head upon her knee; but He is dead. Long ago, in the Temple, her Child had been given back to her; but then the Prophet had said to her: 'Thine own soul a sword shall pierce.' Now, again, He is given back to her; but He is dead. Now the sword has pierced through and through her soul; now her heart is broken by the dolour of death.

Very reverently, very slowly they bear the dead body to the tomb. Sorrowfully, gently, with adoring awe, they lay it on the stone. The shroud is wrapped around; the death-cloth is on the face. One long, last, lingering look. His Mother leaves the tomb. The huge stone is rolled to the entrance of the sepulchre. Mary's steps are turned away. Whither? Home? Oh, home that is no longer home, since the light of it is dark! Oh, home, desolate as the wilderness where the scattered sand-heaps lie in silent monotony like the sterile dust of crumbled hopes! Oh, home, sad as the ruins where the wild grass grows! Oh, home that was once home, when her Child's life, like a sunbeam, gave it light; when her Child's voice made music of all its echoes; when her Child's footstep blessed its floor;

when her own Child's presence made it home. Oh, home that is no home; sad, dark, desolate as the tomb, where she weeps alone in the dolour of her loneliness! This was the last of Mary's dolours; but it only ended with her life. Look back now upon that life. Behold, how it was darkened and distressed by sorrows that uprose in seven appalling tempests of dolour! Behold, how that most innocent and most exquisite maiden, the very fairest flower of earth, the very brightest star of Heaven, was chosen by God's great, deep, tender love, to become the very Mother of Dolours! 'There stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother.' Behold, and learn at last the true meaning of love! God's love is true, and therefore did He become Man in order that He might have a human Heart, tender in sympathy and strong in sacrifice. God's love is true, and therefore did His great Heart give to His own most beloved Mother the greatest share in His sacrifice as well as in His sympathy.

Murmur not then, child, nor misunderstand God's Providence. Murmur not, if He should allow trouble to cloud or trial to fret your life. It is not in anger but in pity, not in stern judgment but in gentle mercy, not in justice but in love, that He would wean your sick soul from disordered cravings after mere material pleasure, that He would train

your character to hardier worth and brighter beauty, that He would purify your love from dross of earth or soil of sin, and lift it up to nobler aims and holier hopes. 'Many are the uses of adversity.' You must go through your training time; you must tread your pilgrim path if you are to become your own true good self 'unto the likeness of Christ,' if you are to win the crown which is only won by Him who hath lawfully striven. Murmur not, child, nor misjudge your gentle Christ, the kind, good Shepherd of your soul. Think not that He has forgotten you, should He let you suffer. Think not that He would punish you, when He sends you sorrow. Nay; it is a sign of His wise watchfulness over you. It is a proof of His deep friendship for you. What sign, what proof more sure, more absolute, of His love than that He should act toward you as towards His own beloved Mother, that He should draw you nearer to Himself. The Cross is the sign of Salvation; it is the sign of Resurrection; and therefore it is the sign of the great love of Him who loved you first and who loves you most, who died in loving ransom of your soul, and who lives in loving recompense to give you full and rapturous share in the happiness of His own eternal Heaven. Murmur not, but trust in Him, in all, for all, in spite of all, and for ever, even when your head is bowed low with grief; even when you suffer as though you had no sympathy;

even when you mourn as though you had no hope ; even though your heart feels hard and embittered as though you could not pray, yet draw near in spirit to the sweet, sad Mother of Dolours as she stands by the Cross of Jesus. Even while you weep, disconsolately or despairingly, let your tears fall with hers. Her tears will mingle with your own, and the soft healing balm of her sympathy will give you a strange courage and a mysterious comfort ; for she will teach you to judge more truly and more lovingly of Him, her Son, your own eldest Brother, ' first-born amongst the dead, who loved you first and who loves you most.'

EASTER SUNDAY

'The Lord is risen, indeed.'—LUKE xxiv. 34.

THERE is no fact in history more certain than the Resurrection of our Lord. It is told in the simple words of men who knew the truth thoroughly, wrote it sincerely, cherished it reverently, lived for it heroically, and died for it triumphantly. It is made more plain by the groundless denials, hollow objections, frivolous difficulties, and foolish suppositions of those who either blindly believe it to be impossible or wilfully wish it to be false. More than this, divinely more; to us this fact is shown by light indwelling in our soul, reflected from the Face of God. We know its truth by Faith.

Again, it is not merely a fact of history. It is no dead fact. It lives yet, as fresh and potent in its bud and promise as when the Angel rolled away the stone; as glorious in its strong reality as when the dazzled soldiers fell or fled in terror; as masterful in love as when our newly risen Christ said to His Apostles 'Peace! My peace be with you!'

The Resurrection of our Lord is a fact that lives in the ever-continued raising of the Church, His mystical Body, from out of human corruption into spiritual youth and health. It lives in the divine calling forth of souls from out the grave of sin to breathe and throb with all the purity and warmth of the supernatural life of grace. It lives in the prophetic growth towards its fulfilment, which shall be the resurrection of the human race. Thus, the Resurrection is Christ's great triumph and Christ's great prophecy. Let us ponder over these two thoughts.

That 'the Lord hath, indeed, arisen' means practically that He first truly died, and yet, afterwards, truly lived. That, by His own power, He Himself came forth living from out the tomb, and so proved Himself God, there is no need to show; because this wonder amongst wonders was both promised pledge and proof in wrought-out fact of His Divinity. No possible creature can raise the dead to life. To do so requires direct dominion over the very substance of a soul. For it is the blending of that soul's inmost essence, with matter, in one substantial unity of life. Now, God alone has such direct dominion over the substance of a spirit. For a spirit, unlike material beings, needs no condition to exist except the one condition of creation. Hence, God alone can make one life of

clay and spirit. But God never puts forth His own high attributes so as to suspend, withstand, or supersede the action of the laws of lesser nature, unless it be to prove some God-like truth, or work some God-like good. Wherefore, Christ's Resurrection is the holiest and the surest sanction given, by infinite power, truth, and sanctity, to His own Word, that He Himself is God.

Now, there can be no excuse for those who deny, or even for those who call in question, the reality of Christ's death. It is so evident! It is evident from the scattering of the Disciples, from their bewilderment, from their utter dismay, and much more from their hard and stubborn disbelief when afterwards told that the Lord had been seen living again in His own true human form. It is evident from the words and actions of the Roman soldiers. These iron masters of the world, whose hearts and hands were cold and sure as their own steel, were not likely to make mistakes in matter of life or death. Now, these stern soldiers said, indeed falsely, that the Body had been stolen while they slept; but they stood under the Cross on which they had nailed the King of the Jews, and saw Him die; they knew that He was dead. They were close by when their officer pierced His dead Heart with a lance; they knew that He was dead. They saw the dead Body laid in the sepulchre,

under the dread seal of implacable Rome, which to violate meant certain death; they knew that He was dead. It is evident from the distrustful eagerness, from the bitter, relentless, savage animosity of the watching millions of Jews who panted with thirsty frenzy for every blood-drop of Him Whom they had crucified. It is evident, with preternatural proof, from the satanic hatred of the high-priests and Pharisees. Their venomous spite, sharpened by keenest cunning; their malignant anger, pointed by most supreme self-interest; their deadliest rage, directed by the calculations of revengeful triumph; their fiercest fury, controlled by the coolness of despairing risk, these were let loose against the meek yet majestic, humble yet kingly Christ, who had laid bare their hypocrisy and proclaimed the downfall of their power. With most horrible, most appalling hazard of guilt and blasphemy, they had staked the deepest sin of time and the deepest hell of eternity in a struggle against Him who, they feared, was in very truth the very Son of God. Thus, all the hopes of their bad hearts and all the terrors of their evil souls hung quivering, as it seemed to them, upon the truth of His real death. The demons who dared a deicide did not leave that death to chance or doubtful fact. Furthermore, there is an evidence of the reality of Christ's death which to some minds may seem even plainer

still. History is a record, handed down through time, of what has actually passed in human life. It is then the domain, not of fiction, but of fact. Now, all men knew long ago that Christ had really died. Yet, within some few score years, the most foolish of German dreamers have tried to spin, out of their own fancy, wild theories about this fact; and the most foul of French free-thinkers have dared to fling, out of their own bad hearts, wicked doubts against its truth. But such doubts and such denials, unknown before, are nearly two thousand years too late for History. Wherefore there is no fact more evident than this: that Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, really died upon the Cross.

That Christ was really living again after the first Easter Sunday is another simple fact of History. This downright ignorance perchance might question, but, without wilful fault, it cannot be denied. Who are the witnesses to prove this truth? Amongst them, we have the legionaries sent to seal and guard the sepulchre with the resistless grasp and relentless hold of iron Rome. There are the Disciples, too, whose disbelief, stubborn even to stupidity, held out against all proof until they not only had gazed upon their risen Lord but saw Him eat before them; aye, until they had actually put their own hands into the living marks of His death-wounds. There are, again, those who, often and in multitudes,

beheld Him with their own eyes, heard Him with their own ears, touched Him with their own fingers, so that their sturdy senses made His new life as plain a fact as is the fact that He had ever lived at all.

Can there be greater evidence than this? No! But yet it may, perhaps, become even plainer still, in this wise: Christ's Resurrection was no quiet fact told by friend to friend; but a trenchant and defiant fact, that loudly gave the lie to all man's best-beloved falsehoods and loudly sentenced man's best-beloved sins. It was a fact that was at once and openly confronted with its deadliest foes, who shrank away from it in self-accusing silence. It was a fact that was at once and boldly set straight before its most incredulous enemies, who shirked its challenge with self-convicting fear. It was a fact that was at once, thoroughly and unmistakenly, published to the world. The world could not ignore it, for it was a fact meant to conquer or to convince the world. It condemned the Jew for deicide. It condemned the Gentile for idolatry. If false, it should and would be crushed; if true, it should and would be worshipped. The wicked world could not deny it, and would not admit it. By its truth, Christianity has renewed the face of the earth. At the first Pentecost, St. Peter preached, in Jerusalem itself, before the gathered nation of the Jews, the Resurrection of the Divine Messiah Whom

they had crucified. Nay, more. It was and is a fact, on which the History of the world hinges, and on which the Morality of the world depends. For, if there be any moral truth on earth, it is the truth of Christianity; and if there be any truth in Christianity, it is the truth of Christ's Resurrection. Therefore doth St. Paul, in letters which have since been read throughout all ages and throughout all nations, write, 'If Christ has not risen, then our preaching is vain, and your Faith is also vain.'

From that time until now the Apostles have announced this fact, making it the corner-stone of Christianity. Were they unheeded, pitied, or laughed at, as are those who offer to ground upon an idle dream or flimsy falsehood the dread realities of human life? No, no! The wicked world bore its testimony to the truth they taught, by the intense bitterness of its hate, by the savage fierceness of its assaults, by the undisguised meanness, the unabashed baseness of its treachery, by its inveterate, implacable, ruthless eagerness to turn against it, when possible, every brutal tool and foul weapon of physical violence, by its uncontrollable delight when it could fling against it some new venomous jeer or some old shameless slander. Ha! Even the wicked world never writhes with such blind rage, never raves forth such abominable turpitudes, against a teaching that is not true. That the wicked

world, unwillingly, unwittingly, admits its own pride to be paralysed, its own pleasures to be poisoned, its own sin to be sentenced, its own life to be proved a lie by the preaching of this fact, this is the wicked world's testimony to its truth.

On the other hand, all that is good and noble in the world has also borne its high testimony to the truth of Christ's Resurrection. The good are clear-sighted in moral matters. It can only be through some strange mishap if real virtue ever really leans on what is really false ; for, even upon earth, truth and goodness are bound together in such divine kinship that even should a passing chance cause them to stray asunder, yet the innermost forces of their very essence, more constant and more sure than gravitation, and the actual identity of their living sympathy, true and intense, deathless and resistless as love, must again join them soon and strongly. As, in heaven, the eternal Truth, begotten of the eternal self-knowledge of Self-existent Being, together with it, known with knowing, Son with Father, spoken Word of Truth with speaking principle of Reality, one true and real principle, breathes an eternal holiness of love ; so, amongst the created images of God, real truth is always fruitful in real worth, and again, real worth is always an unerring as well as a loving evidence of real truth. Now, since Christ died, the good who

are in the world have borne their testimony to His Resurrection, for they have adored Him. All the real goodness that is in Christianity, divinely real as it is and divinely good, proves its truth; but its truth is this, that 'the Lord is truly risen.'

Wherefore Christ's Resurrection was His great triumph. It was His triumphal rising up from His own grave; His triumphal entry into His own kingdom; His triumphal mounting, in His own human nature, to His own throne as God; whence He triumphantly rules all things for ever and for ever. It was Christ's triumph. It is so still. As truly as the Lord liveth, His Resurrection is, in heaven, for evermore, a living and triumphal fact.

On earth, too, Christ's triumph lives. It lives in the undying raising of lost human nature from out of the tomb of crumbling falsehood and putrid sin, up to see the glorious sunshine, up to breathe the happy freshness, which beam and break, softly and sweetly, through the lightsome, gladsome mysteries of supernatural faith and trust. It lives in that most blessed grace of Christ, which, through every hour of every age, vivifies human souls that erst were dead, quickening and transfusing them with the indwelling strength and immortality of God-like life. It lives, with a plenitude wide as the world, lasting as the ages, brilliant as Paradise, in that marvellous life of Christ on earth, His moral

incarnation in a human Church. 'Ye are the body of Christ,' saith St. Paul. Thus, in the divine truth and purity and love of those who are called in one hope of their vocation to be one body and one spirit, united by the bond of peace, born of one baptism, nourished with one faith, obeying one Lord, serving one God and Father of all, living through the grace which is given to each one of us according to the measure of the gift of Christ, that we may grow 'unto the edification of the body of Christ, till we all meet in the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ.' In this divine truth and purity and love Christ's Resurrection is still, on earth, an actual fact and an ever-living triumph. Think of what the world would be without Redemption, of what it was before our Saviour died, and then, from out the grave, where lay the dust of human hopes, where battened the foulness of human sin, behold a fair and holy Church arise!

In the pagan world there was, indeed, a greatness, but such a greatness as is that of fallen nature. There was the strength of anger, the swiftness of greed, the courage of ambition, the patience of selfishness, the perseverance of hatred, the devotedness of lust. But there was weakness, too, the weakness of human animals, who had no

hope but that of death, no help but that of their own foolish head and failing hand, in the desperate war of life. There was the fretful fever of possessed power, the brooding bitterness of impotent envy, the railing of discontented poverty, the disgust of glutted sloth, the fettered quiet of the conquered, the exultant ferocity of the conqueror, the fretful watchfulness of unjust greed, the weary watchfulness of unjust gain, the smouldering wrongs of the oppressed, the heartless licence of the oppressor, the degradation of the brutal slave, the terror of the brutal despot, the heart-breaking struggle of human hope against human wretchedness until experience of selfishness brought men to judge only of life from unhappy cynicism, and in love to look only to use. Thus, there was the weakness born of the sure knowledge that failure would be crushed beneath contempt and scorn as well as beneath unpitied ruin, while success would win more remorseless treachery and more unmitigated hate. In all, and above all, there was the weakness of soul against sense, so that the passions of the human beast, whether they were those of the ape or of the tiger, of the serpent or of the swine, usurped such mastery over reason and over will as to drag these high powers from their throne, and make them, grovelling, give their sight and strength to serve in the loathsome drudgery of sin. Do you doubt this? Then think of what the

world would be without Redemption. It would be like a sunless earth, over which eternal night had settled and never a day should dawn. Do you doubt even this? Then draw back down into the secret hiding-places of your own heart, and look at what you are yourself when you stray away from all thought or love of Christ, when you are alone amidst the riot and rent and whirl and chaos of pagan thoughts and desires!

But now behold the Church of Christ, His own immortal body, which He has raised up out of the bones and dust of the dead pagan world. In her there is a strange strength. She has the strength of humble reverence for truth, the strength of unswerving fixedness in good, the strength of joyful patience under trial, of resigned trustfulness in sorrow, of high-minded poverty, of open-handed wealth, of power used in kindliness, of obedience springing from the heart, of purity brave as warrior's heroism, of courage graced by maiden modesty, of meekness amongst the wise, of nobility amongst the ignorant, of greatness simple and innocent, of lowliness gentle and self-respecting, unobtrusive and sublime, of broad prudence, of devoted unselfishness, of magnanimous zeal, of pure affection. She has the strength of every virtue, the strength that is always strong, the strength of the Spirit indwelling within her life, the strength of Christian love.

Yet even she is weak; for she is a Church of human hearts and souls. She is weak in material help, weak in armed force, weak in the cunning of the world. She is sometimes said to be weak through the weakness of her children; but while it is true that they who are her children may be weak, it is not true that they are weak because they are her children. Those children of hers are weak who wander away, lose themselves, and abandon their birthright; not those who abide with their sweet mother, hearken to her bidding, and are happy in her halls. Never was son or daughter of hers weak with the weakness of sin who had not first denied her authority, or rebelled against her will, and so ceased to be true child of hers. Out of so many multitudes, some few frail souls, one time children of her home, have gone out away. They have rejected her teaching, or they have scorned her command, and, by defiling their own innocence, they have brought dishonour on her name. But such weakness is not hers. These fallen ones are weak because they are dead to her; for theirs is the weakness of pagans, and she is the Church of Christ.

Again, in this way she is weak: that she must follow, with faint foot, frail hand, and heart forlorn, on the path of suffering which her Lord has trod before. Thus she is weak with humiliation, weak with pain, weak with trial, weak with pity, weak

with sympathy, weak with sorrow. She is so weak! Were it not for the unfailing clasp of Christ's hand, she would, at any moment, sink, overwhelmed and shattered by the storms of earth and hell. It is only in the strength of Christ that, like a divine vision of peace and power, she walks triumphant over the bitter, fruitless, treacherous, disastrous and destructive waters of the world. She is not like the world. It has the strength of human passion, and every weakness born of guilt. She has every human weakness that is pure, but she has the strength of God.

This, then—the victory over the death that dooms our mortal bodies, and over the sin that dooms immortal souls, over all the weakness of evil hearts, and over all the strength of the wicked world, gained by a weakness that is divinely pure—this is the enduring and actual triumph of the Resurrection of our Lord.

The Resurrection is also Christ's great prophecy. No work which He foretold was in itself more wonderful, nor was the foreknowledge of it more divine, than that promised in words which God alone, omniscient and omnipotent, might truly utter when He said: 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up again.'

The Temple of Jerusalem was one of the most magnificent monuments, as it was incomparably the most memorable shrine, ever raised by man

upon the earth. The patriotism of an enthusiastic nation and the religion of a consecrated people had spent their devotedness and zeal in the toil of its erection, while the ideal realised by its plan and by its proportions had been inspired from Heaven. Its foundations were rooted in the rocks that had been set with the strength of creation. Upon them stood, in massive mightiness, walls like the mountains that steady the earth. From them, buttresses, like the cliffs that hold the ocean back, towered and soared upwards. Pillars, huge in size yet fairylike in form, colonnades, one in their united beauty of thought, yet multitudinous in their unwearying reiterations of wonder, sprang from the ground, like giant trunks of trees in some primeval forest that lift themselves, in one straight stateliness, up to where their dizzy branches bend with waving arch and bud with leafy cornice, above a dreamlike height of solemn shade, beneath the sky. Again above, and still upwards, away from earth, pinnacles, like prayers, flashed heavenwards. Over all, like a sun stooping amidst clouds of golden eventide, the glory of its dome hung, glistening, glittering, glowing with ever varying sheen and ever brilliant rapture, like the visible splendour of God. The most stupendous cathedrals would have appeared insignificant in its presence, yet each detail of its bewildering vastness was finished with all the jealous

care and lingering love of an artist. Exquisite in its grace, perfect in its symmetry, majestic in its proportions, dazzling in its richness, fascinating in its beauty, overwhelming in its grandeur, it was a sublime act of faith in the power and presence of Jehovah.

There was a temple nobler still, a shrine more sacred, of which God's glorious home in Sion was only type and figure. There was a temple, not built by hand of man, but fashioned by the power of God, not made of lifeless stone or dead wood, but moulded of what is fairest in palpitating excellence of life, not enriched by metal, nor made bright by gem, nor brilliant with flower-like colour, nor adorned with marble art, nor clothed with choicest textures of the loom, but set in stateliest majesty of breathing grace and throbbing strength, wrought in subtlest harmony of finely woven tissue and delicately thrilling nerve, blooming with soft hues not imaged from the lily or the rose, but mirrored forth from inner depths of loveliness, not vibrating with the heat of fire nor of sun, but beating ever with out-welling warmth from the purest tenderness and strongest vigour of heart and blood, beautiful with every perfect gift of nature, beautiful with every rapturous charm of grace, beautiful with every tone and shade of sympathy, beautiful with every light and depth of love, beautiful, most beautiful

amongst the children of men. This temple was the most sacred body of our Lord. It was, in truth, the holy of holies, the throne of majesty, the sanctuary of the Most High, the consecrated shrine, the hallowed home; yea, yea! it was the living, breathing body in which lived and breathed the Godhead. It was the human substance joined in one real person with the eternal Word.

The body of Christ, this temple of the Deity to be itself adored, was bound, as was also Christ's human soul, in deathless union with the divine nature of the Son of God. Yet, while neither soul nor body was ever separated from Himself, He allowed the one to be, by human death, sundered from the other. Thus, the fair temple of Christ's human nature was, by His human death, destroyed. When Christ, by His own power as God, reuniting again together in human life His own body and His soul, arose glorious and immortal from the dead, He built this temple up again, and thus was His prophecy in part complete.

The Resurrection of our Lord is in itself a prophecy of further and fuller life. For, as St. Paul explains, Christ is head and therefore representative of all the human race. Hence, as the merit of His death is ours, so, too, in the triumph of His Resurrection, we conquered death and won our right to future immortality. Therefore does St. Paul

call Christ 'first-born amongst the dead' and therefore does he say 'If we shall not arise, neither did Christ Himself arise.' Wherefore Christ's own Resurrection is promise, pledge, and prophecy of the resurrection of all that human nature which through His victory conquered death.

God will rebuild the earthen temples of our souls. As all the primal glory of our human nature has been won back by Christ, so shall our bodies be restored to the first perfectness of Paradise. The symmetry, the grace, the majesty, the beauty, the umarred excellence, the crowning loveliness that was the image of God's love in Eden, shall be again, in our own life renewed. Shall this be for all? To all there shall indeed be given a full development of perfect nature. For our nature, not having sinned, shall fully triumph over death. But here the likeness ends between the wicked and the good. The bodies of the sinful shall arise to be the torture-houses of lost souls. Therefore doth the Psalmist sing: 'The wicked shall not rise again in judgment, nor sinners in the council of the just.' But the bodies of the just shall come forth from the tomb, not only with the strength and comeliness of the Creator's noblest work on earth, but with the dazzling excellence and incarnate grace, the rapturous loveliness and transcendent beauty, the radiant mystery and unimaginable glory of human forms and features

in which breathe, and through which shine, the all-absorbing happiness and the all-transfusing ecstasy of the vision of the face of God.

Listen again to this prophecy, as it is uttered by St. Paul: 'Behold, I tell you a mystery! We shall all indeed rise again; but we shall not all be changed: in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible; and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality. And when this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? Now, the sting of death is sin. But thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

Hereafter we shall arise from death to glory, if now we arise from sin to grace. We must not slumber in the valley of death. We must not remain buried with the dead pagan world. 'Awake, ye just, and sin not!' 'If ye be risen with Christ, seek ye the things that are above.' Cling not to the hollow shadows of pagan darkness, but love the

light. Lie not grovelling in the grave of earthly hopes, but soar upwards to spiritual aims that shall not fail for ever. Live now in the strength of Christ's great triumph, that hereafter you may live in the fulfilment of Christ's great prophecy.

If, then, you would live in spirit and in truth, eat the Bread of Life. 'Amen, amen, I say unto you,' saith Christ 'he that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.' 'He that eateth this Bread shall live for ever.' Wherefore fail not, by frequent Communion, to make of your own mortal bodies sacred shrines, hallowed tabernacles, temples consecrated by the Real Presence and living love of our Eucharistic King. Come, come, to our Immortal Christ! Let Him, in the sacramental stooping of His divine pity, in the mysterious outpouring of His human tenderness, let Him unite your life unto His own. He will flood your soul with grace. He will fill your heart with benediction. He will render your very flesh and bone holy and immortal. Thus shall you rise with our risen Christ; for He Himself will be the divine pledge and veiled gift of the coming happiness and dawning glory of your own resurrection. Amen.

'FLOWERS IN THE TOMB'

ASSUMPTION

'Behold, my Beloved speaketh to me: Arise! make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come! For the winter is now past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land; the time of pruning is come; the voice of the turtle is heard; the fig-tree hath put forth its green buds; the vines and the blossoms yield their sweet smell. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come! Come, thou shalt be crowned!'
CANT. ii. 10–13

LISTEN, once more, to the story of our Lady's death and Assumption, as it has from the first been held and handed down by the loving hearts of her children. Twelve years after the Resurrection of her Son, our Lord, the hour came for Mary to end her exile, and pass away from earth to heaven. In the home of St. John, the Mother of Jesus was dying. No physical weakness drained away her life; no mortal sickness marred it. For, as the Fathers teach, not only had innocence ever brightened and embalmed her soul, but to her stainless body had

been also given, in beauty and in health, the perfectness of Paradise. But all her soul thrilled with such absorbing contemplation, and all her spirit fainted with such intensity of longing love, that those feeble threads which bound her human life together had been snapped, did not God's power miraculously uphold her strength that was failing through too great an ecstasy, did not God's pity soothe her heart that was breaking through too great a yearning for Him. Now, the miracle which kept her in life is needed no longer for the aims of divine Providence, and Mary is dying of love.

From the far-off countries where they were preaching the good tidings of Christ's Resurrection, the Apostles are miraculously gathered together around the death-bed of the Mother of Christ. When her breathing spirit had passed away from their midst, the Apostles reverently bore her saintly body and laid it in the tomb. On the third day they return, but find that the Angels have taken away the body of their Queen. All the air round throbs with the harmonies of heaven; the breeze is embalmed with the perfume of roses from Paradise, and pure white lilies are growing out of the earth that had been touched by the immaculate clay of God's Mother. Sweet mystery of death! Happy wonder of resurrection! We will meditate upon the meaning of these Flowers in the Tomb.

Why should Mary die? Death is natural to man. That angel-spirit which has been breathed within us by the breath of God is indeed deathless, but the clay which is its earthly shrine is subject to the force and influence of matter, and so, like all things earthly, must either sink beneath the crushing stroke of adverse energy or yield under the relentless grasp of constant change, and so must, in the end, perish. But when, in the first creation of His love, God raised our human nature to supernatural likeness with His own, He dowered it with material health and strength and youth, as well as with all spiritual glories of the soul; that, while man was faithful, he should never die, but pass, in the harvest-time of life, from the sowing-field of happy service to the home of happy rest in the vision of the face of God. Thus, immortality was given with grace. Both were lost by sin. Both were bought back by Christ, who died that we might live. Yet, for sin's atonement, the immortality of our bodies has been deferred till after death. But Mary had never sinned. The shadow of Adam's fall never rested on her soul. Mary was immaculate; why not then immortal? 'The wages of sin is death.' She was all fair, and there was no stain upon her soul. Through the merits of her Son she had been preserved even from original sin; why not also from sin's penalty? Why should Mary die?

The first creation was the work of God's power abounding in blessing, overflowing in happiness, fruitful in perfect peace. The Redemption, the second creation as the Church calls it, was the work of God's mercy, sown in trial, watered with tears, ripening into fellowship in pain. Yet the Redemption by sorrow was divinely greater than the Creation of gladness; for it began by the union of God's love to the heart of a Child, born of a human Mother; it was carried out by the stooping of God to pain and by the lifting up of man to sacrifice; it resulted in a personal sympathy of tenderness and in a personal devotedness of friendship between the Creator and the creature. In this mysterious plan of sadder yet sweeter, of gentler yet greater Providence, the sufferings of the Man-God made sorrow in some sense divine, made pain a blessing, and of our pilgrim-path through trials and through tears made the only and the royal road to heaven. Likeness with the Man of Sorrows became the test and the measure of sanctity. The King, Christ, chose for His throne a Cross: therefore did the Mother of the King become the Mother of Dolours. Christ, the great High-Priest, freely died for love of man: therefore was His Mother laid like Him, for love of Him, within the tomb. Jesus died for love; of love, Mary was His Mother. Therefore was it that Mary died.

Our human history is one long record of lives, often chequered, always ending, with a sad 'Good-bye.' Those who have grown up together, as well as those who have met and twined their affections into one, must, some time or another, part. Hands that have been strongly clasped in friendship are often wrenched asunder. Hearts that have throbbed in sympathy are either separated by melancholy seas, or they are forced apart by miserable circumstance, or one grows weak with worldly interest and drifts away, or both become embittered and estranged through pride or passion, through callous cruelty or faithless fault. Whether it be owing to absence or to disunion, what heart has not felt the pain of parting?

Yet, while there is life, there is still hope. There is one parting which to mere human nature brings a sorrow that has no hope, a pain that has no balm. It is the parting by the grave. Naturally speaking, although the soul must live for ever, the ashes which once clothed it with human form must lie for ever strewn and scattered amidst the clay from which they came. 'Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return' is, naturally speaking, the final doom of human hearts. To merely mortal hope, death is a parting for ever. It blots out in utter darkness the sight of friends. It changes the sound of their voices into the echo of a dream. Soon, too soon,

it chills even the faint fragrance of their memory. Death is, indeed, a rest; but it is a rest that has no waking, a rest within a dark grave, a rest beneath the cold clay, a rest that brings decay to the crumbling corpse, a rest which brings unrest to the mourning lives which weep, like funereal cypress, over the dank tomb. Death is rest to the dead; it is no rest to the living!

Death, as it is pictured to mortal eyes, is a figure gaunt and terrible, with hour-glass to let slip quickly by the sands of time, with scythe to mow down human lives for eternity. Through the tall meadows that are mature and ripe, through the young flowers that are budding, through the strong grasses of the field, through the tender shoots of the garden, through them all, ruthlessly, ceaselessly, flashes the cold, quick stroke of Death's scythe; and, on the weeping bosom of the earth, father, mother, brother, sister, friend, lover, fall. Death is the pitiless reaper of human life and love. 'Suffer me therefore,' saith Job, in the depth of his human desolation, 'suffer me that I may lament my sorrow a little, before I go and return no more, to a land that is dark and covered with the mist of death, a land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth.'

Yes, yes! To mortal man, death is a parting

that is sad and terrible. It were, indeed, the hopeless end of all our life that is not purely spiritual, it were the final parting from all human sympathy and tenderness of heart, had not Christ, our Brother, 'first-born amongst the dead,' won for our race a true and glorious resurrection. But, behold! From the risen Sun of glory a strange light falls upon the grave! The dismal figure of Death has disappeared before the dawn of immortality! Behold! a strange smile passes over the face of the dead; a strange joy wakens within your heart! Death has died in the Resurrection of our Christ! Yea, yea! out of the very grave spring the sweetness and the bloom of life. Lo! There are flowers in the tomb! For the Christian there is no death; it is not death, but slumber!

Never again shall you see that face drawn or pale with pain. Never again shall you see that brow furrowed by deep lines of care. Never again shall you see that frame bowed down by age, racked by suffering, or wasted by disease. Never again shall you read in those eyes the weary tale of disappointment, or the agonising message of grief. Never again shall you see that face in sorrow, never again in tears. But you shall see that face again, ever again, in joy. The step shall be light, and that body shall be crowned with deathless beauty and health, ever again. That face shall glow with eternal

rapture, those eyes shall smile upon you, with love, again, ever again, and for ever. Set the Cross of the living Christ above the grave of the Christian! Set blooming flowers on the tomb! It is not death, but slumber! They only sleep! They rest in peace. They are waiting with Christ to meet us, again and for ever, at the resurrection. Death? For us there is no death! It is not death, but slumber!

It was indeed befitting the Providence which had for the central aim of its mercy the death of our Redeemer, Christ, that the Mother of Christ should pass away from life through death. It was also most befitting that the same Providence which made the death of Christ the pledge and prophecy of resurrection should raise the stainless Mother of Christ from death to share in the Resurrection of her Son. The truth of the Assumption of our Lady cannot be questioned by any child of our Catholic Faith; yet we may, not as proof, but as motive of reverent love, recall some sayings of holy and learned men. Contemplate the Virgin Mother as she is now in the glory of her Assumption, with her divine Son, our glorious Christ. Hear the words of St. Peter of Blois: 'Must it not have appeared even to the risen Christ that there was something wanting to Him in heaven, so long as He had not drawn up towards Himself her whose flesh and blood had

given life and birth to His own divine Body? Eagerly did He then desire to have with Himself this Vessel of Election, the virginal body within which He had deigned to dwell, this stainless body embalmed with every virtue and fragrant with the flowers of Paradise.' Now listen to a thought of St. Francis de Sales: 'One cannot think that God's own Mother could have died of any other kind of death than that of love, a death noblest of any death, and therefore fitting end of noblest life, a death so sweet that by it the very angels themselves would wish to die were death possible to them.' Listen, again, to St. John Damascene: 'She submits to the law promulgated by the Son Whom she conceived . . . because her own Son . . . did not make Himself an exception to it. But because she is a Mother of the living God, it is only right that, restored by Him to life, she should be straightway brought by Him to heaven.' Hear St. Theodore: 'O Virgin, I behold thee slumbering, not dead; thou hast been taken from earth to heaven . . . Mother, thou didst remain Virgin because He to Whom thou didst give birth was God. It is for this reason that thy death was so far different from ours.' The words of the Psalmist (Ps. xxxi. 8) seem to refer to this: 'Rise up, O Lord, from Thy repose, Thou and the ark of Thy sanctification.' This thought is applied by St. John Damascene:

'It was not befitting that the ever-blessed Virgin should be imprisoned in the bosom of the earth. It seems only fitting that the Son of God, who, at His birth, preserved without stain the virginity of His Mother, should preserve her after her death from that corruption which is the doom of our corrupt mortality.' Again, St. John Damascene wrote: 'How could this Virgin, who was united by her whole being to God, become the prey of death or a prisoner of the tomb? How could corruption dare attack her who gave us life? Once more I say, O Virgin Mother, thine immaculate body did not become a captive of the tomb. Thou wast assumed living into that royal home above, thou Queen, our Lady, thou sovereign mistress, thou real and true Mother of God!' Now hear St. Peter of Cellio: 'Could He despise, could He forsake that dear body, that beloved clay? Could He leave it to become the prey of foul corruption? Could He forget His temple, His chosen sanctuary, the living bosom that was His resting-place, His kingly palace, His home, His beloved home, the terrestrial paradise of His unborn infancy, His Mother?' Behold her, then, the second and greater Eve, reigning from her throne of supreme excellence, crowned Queen of Earth and Heaven, the type and mirror, next to Christ, of all that is best and most beautiful.

Meditate one moment now upon Christ's visit to His Mother's tomb. May we not think that when the virginal body which had enshrined the eternal Word was to be lifted up again, and joined in true throbbing human life with Mary's soul—may we not think, must we not think, that He Himself, her own true Son, should come Himself, came Himself, in His own true human form, to raise His own beloved Mother from the grave? Reverently kneel in spirit by the tomb where Mary sleeps, and see her Son bend over her dear face. The face of His Mother is white and still. The eyes which had watched with love over His cradle, the eyes which had with love followed Him through life, the eyes which had met His own with love as He died, those eyes of His Mother are closed, draped with their dark lashes, like silken fringes of mourning black. His Mother's smile is still, as the smile of marble lips. His Mother's features are white as the snow, white as the sad snow that weeps over the dreary earth in the winter; His Mother's features are as white as the snow, and as cold. Had not our dear Lord a human heart? As, in the unveiled glory of His sacred humanity, He bent over the dead face of His Mother, did not His human heart yearn with exceeding tenderness for the sight of her smile, and the sound of her voice, to whom He owed His precious blood? Once He had wept over a dead

friend, and bade him come forth living from the tomb. Now it is His own Mother that is dead. He does not weep; for in her slumber there can be no sadness, in His heart there can be, now, no pain. But must we not believe that all the human sweetness of His voice thrilled with triumphant love as it echoed the bidding of His divine power, calling aloud: 'Mother! come forth!' 'Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come! For the winter is now past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land; the time of pruning is come; the voice of the turtle is heard; the fig-tree hath put forth its green buds; the vines and the blossoms yield their sweet smell. Arise! my love, my beautiful one, and come! Come! Thou shalt be crowned!' Thus does the Prophet-Poet sing, fore-uttering in the Song of Songs the words of welcome wherewith Christ called His Mother as she slumbered in her tomb of flowers.

At the bidding of her Son, the immaculate spirit of our Lady breathed again within the pure clay which had been its earthly habitation, and, from the dead, in the full majesty, splendour, beauty, and beatitude of glorified human life, Mary arose.

Homewards, to heaven, in triumph, did the Angels bear their Queen. Homewards! Away from the valley of exile, from under the shadow of

death, to peace eternal, to joy cloudless and endless, to the land where there is no pain, to the life where there is no parting, Mary passed for evermore! Homewards! With Him, Jesus, her own Child, the adorable fruit of her innocence and love, the abiding treasure of her heart and soul, homewards! With Him, by Him, was Mary assumed into heaven.

From the Assumption of our Lady we may learn a twofold lesson. Firstly, we should take a true and Christian view of death. It is only a parting for a time. 'In heaven we shall know our own.' Wherefore, 'awaiting this blessed hope and coming of our Lord,' even though we weep, we should lay bright flowers on the tomb of those we love; for it is not death, but slumber! Secondly, we should learn to live in the thought of our own resurrection. We should reverence, in all modesty, these bodies of ours, which are the living temples of the Holy Ghost, and which shall one day, please God, become the living tabernacles of our glorified and happy souls. Wherefore we should keep them jealously pure from every soil of sin. Nay, more, we should strengthen, bless, and consecrate them, as often as may be, by actual union with the real Body and the Blood of Christ, through the incarnation of His love, the Eucharist. For, in truth, to quote the words of the great Tertullian, 'Our very flesh is nourished with the Body and the Blood

of Christ, in order that our soul may be replenished by His Divinity. For this reason shall our bodies share in our beatitude, that they have been hallowed by the presence of our God.' Again, St. Irenæus writes: 'Our bodies that receive the Eucharist are no longer doomed to corruption, since they thus receive the living hope and pledge of immortality.'

Look, then, forward towards the dawn! In the words of the Canticle, 'Till the day break, and the shadows retire,' wait! wait! not idly, not drearily, as those who have no hope; but, as you wait, watch the morning light up the clouds with promise of Paradise. Wait and watch, in all patience, even when the faces of friends vanish in the mists of the gloaming! Wait and watch, in all purity, walking warily! Let no foul stain of earth, let no poisonous thing that creeps in the night, let no soil of sin or shame sully the angelic innocence of your soul, or tarnish the transparent loveliness of bodies consecrated by Christ. In all patience and in all purity, wait! 'Till the day break, and the shadows retire,' watch! The mists that fell in tears and trials shall be lifted in the dawn of beauty and happiness for evermore! You shall live again, and for ever! You shall meet them again whom you loved! They shall meet you again, on the threshold where there is no darkness, no death, but joy that is bright as the sunshine, and peace that is strong as

the pillars of heaven! Wait, till the song of the Saints hush you to sleep in Christ! Watch, till the voice of Christ waken you also from slumber, calling, in triumph and love: 'Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come! For the winter is now past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land. Arise, and come! Come! Thou shalt be crowned!'

LAUS DEO SEMPER!

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